United Nations A/72/280

General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 August 2017

Original: English

**Seventy-second session**
Item 73 (b) of the provisional agenda*
**Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms**

# International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

In its resolution 70/160, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit, at its seventy-first and seventy-second sessions, a report on the status of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request.

In a note verbale dated 28 March 2017, the Secretary-General invited Governments to transmit any information pertaining to the implementation of resolution 70/160. Replies were received from the Governments of Cuba, Ecuador, Hungary, Mexico, Montenegro, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo and Uzbekistan. Their responses are summarized in the present report.

The present report also includes information on the activities carried out in relation to the implementation of the resolution by the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and his Office, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

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17-13309 (E) 180817

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# I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 70/160, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit, at its seventy-first and seventy-second sessions, a report on the status of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request. The previous report is available in document A/71/278.

2. On 28 March 2017, the Secretary-General invited Member States to transmit relevant information pertaining to the implementation of the resolution. As at 1 July 2017, replies had been received from the Governments of Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, Hungary, Mexico, Montenegro, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo and Uzbekistan. The Secretary-General also sent requests for information on the implementation of the resolution to specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and civil society organizations. Submissions were received from Amnesty International, the Asian Federation against Involuntary Disappearances, Geneva for Human Rights — Global Training, the International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances, Redress Trust (REDRESS) and TRIAL International. Their responses are summarized herein.

# II. Status of ratification of the Convention

3. As at 1 July 2017, 96 States had signed and 56 had ratified or acceded to the Convention; 22 States had recognized the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to receive and consider communications from or on behalf of individuals subject to its jurisdiction claiming to be victims of a violation by the State party of provisions of the Convention (art. 31); and 23 States had recognized the competence of the Committee to receive and consider communications in which a State party claimed that another State party was not fulfilling its obligations under the Convention (art. 32). Updated information on the status of ratification of the Convention may be found in the annex to the present report.

# III. Replies received from States

4. Summaries of the replies of States relating to the implementation of resolution 70/160 are provided below.

### Cuba

5. Cuba actively participated in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the Convention and was among the first countries to sign, on 6 February 2007. It has been a State party since 2 February 2009. It continually evaluates the possibility of accepting the procedures in articles 31 and 32 of the Convention, which Cuba observes are optional. Cuba has not requested or received any assistance from the Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights or any organ of the United Nations, any intergovernmental or non-governmental organization or the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances in relation to enforced disappearances or any aspect of the application of the Convention, given that such assistance has not been necessary since the revolution of 1959. Cuba indicates that, through its internal and external policies, it puts into practice respect for the physical and moral integrity of the individual, which allows it to ensure that there have been no cases of disappearances, torture or secret detention, with the exception of the illegally occupied naval base of the United

States of America in Guantanamo. Cuba notes that its legal system not only establishes the basic universally recognized legal guarantees relating to human rights, but also offers specific guarantees for the real and effective exercise of all human, civil and political and economic, social and cultural rights. Cuba defended its first report to the Committee in March 2017. During the constructive dialogue with the Committee, the Cuban efforts and achievements regarding human rights were recognized. Cuba reiterated its willingness to maintain a constructive and respectful dialogue with the organs of the human rights treaties to which it was party. It reaffirmed its commitment to continue to work on and provide follow-up to the recommendations received, insofar as they corresponded to the reality and needs of the country.

**Denmark**

6. Denmark will ratify the Convention when the amendments to Danish law that are necessary to meet the obligations stemming from the Convention have been adopted and Parliament has given its consent to ratification. Denmark will also consider the possibility of recognizing the competence of the Committee under articles 31 and 32 of the Convention after having completed a study on the legal implications of doing so. Denmark has not requested or received assistance from the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner, United Nations agencies and organizations or the Working Group.

**Ecuador**

7. Ecuador ratified the Convention on 20 October 2009 and it entered into force on 23 December 2010. Ecuador complied with the international obligations deriving from the Convention by submitting its report in June 2015 and defending it in March 2017. Ecuador has recognized the competence of the Committee to receive and consider communications.

**Hungary**

8. Hungary has expressed its willingness to ratify the Convention on several occasions. Interministerial consultations, including the necessary review of national legislation, are ongoing in order to adopt the Hungarian text of the Convention and proceed to the promulgation of a law to implement the Convention in due course.

**Mexico**

9. Mexico ratified the Convention in 2008. After consultations with various competent authorities, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has concluded that the recognition of the competence of the Committee to receive individual communications under article 31 of the Convention could mean a duplication of the work of regional and international bodies for the protection of human rights. Given that Mexico recognizes the jurisdiction of regional human rights bodies, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, to receive individual communications relating to, among other things, the commission of the crime of enforced disappearance, Mexico deals with cases of disappearances before those mechanisms.

10. Mexico notes that there are both governmental and independent mechanisms in the country to address complaints and petitions relating to human rights violations. In October 2016, a special prosecutor's office dedicated to enforced disappearances, whose primary aim is to locate victims, was established within the Office of the Attorney General. To this end it uses the most advanced technology to implement a protocol approved for the search for missing persons and investigation of the crime

of enforced disappearance, which harmonizes the criteria in relation to searching for persons with international and national standards and recommendations. In addition, the country's human rights institutions at both the federal and state levels that are aware of alleged cases of disappearances investigate the facts and, if appropriate, issue recommendations in that regard. In particular, an investigative unit of the National Human Rights Commission has the authority to receive and investigate complaints relating to persons whose whereabouts are unknown and whose disappearance allegedly involves the participation of any authority or public servant, with the aim of determining the location of the allegedly disappeared person.

11. At the international level, Mexico has accepted the jurisdiction of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights — within the Inter-American human rights system — as well as of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, thus ensuring that judicial and quasi-judicial mechanisms at both the regional and international levels can respond to complaints concerning alleged violations of human rights.

12. The Government of Mexico has not carried out internal consultations on recognizing the competence of the Committee to receive inter-State complaints under the framework of article 32. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has, however, undertaken a process of analysis and reflection. It has concluded that Mexico is opposed, in principle, to recognizing the competence of the organs of the nine major human rights treaties of the United Nations to receive inter-State complaints, given that these complaints tend to be politicized. Nevertheless, the will of Mexico to ensure compliance with the Convention and to combat disappearance is expressed in its recognition of the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, the judicial organ of the United Nations, to settle international conflicts between States. It is expected that, with respect to any breach of the Convention by a third State, the case may be brought before that international tribunal, meaning that it is currently unnecessary for Mexico to recognize the competence of the Committee.

**Montenegro**

13. Montenegro ratified the Convention on 20 October 2011 and recognized the competence of the Committee to receive individual communications and inter-State complaints.

14. In compliance with article 29 of the Convention, Montenegro submitted its report to the Committee in 2013 and replied to the list of issues adopted by the Committee. The constructive dialogue between Montenegro and the Committee was held in September 2015, following which the Committee issued its concluding observations. In November 2016, Montenegro submitted follow-up information on the recommendations highlighted by the Committee. During the first session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, Montenegro supported the continuation of the Committee as the monitoring body of the Convention.

15. In February 2017, Montenegro replied to the questionnaire by the Working Group on a study on enforced disappearances in the context of migration.

**Romania**

16. Romania signed the Convention on 3 December 2008. Romania reports that its new Criminal Code includes, in its article 439, enforced disappearance as a crime against humanity when perpetrated with the aim of placing a person outside the protection of the law for a long time, by abduction, arrest or detention, at the order of a State or a political organization or with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State, followed by a refusal to admit that the person has been

deprived of liberty or to provide real information about the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, thus placing the person outside the protection of the law. The applicable penalty is life imprisonment or imprisonment of between 15 and 25 years and the suspension of the exercise of certain rights.

**Slovenia**

17. Slovenia is a signatory to the Convention and continues to strive for its ratification. The Ministry of Justice is preparing an analysis of the Convention, with a view to re-examining and identifying open questions regarding its ratification. Under the existing Slovenian legal framework, the conditions for the ratification of the Convention are not yet met. The Ministry will, therefore, also prepare proposals for establishing a legal basis to enable ratification. The provisions of articles 31 and 32 of the Convention will be discussed and reviewed in the context of the above-mentioned analysis. After the analysis, an assessment will be made of whether it is necessary to strengthen the dialogue with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on practical aspects of the implementation of the Convention within the scope of paragraphs 5 and 6 of resolution 70/160.

**Sweden**

18. Sweden signed the Convention in 2007. Before it can ratify the Convention, an analysis of possible legislative amendments is required. It is the view of Sweden, however, that its legislation essentially meets the requirements of the Convention. Sweden has neither requested nor received assistance to become party to the Convention or in the understanding and implementation of the obligations under the Convention.

**Switzerland**

19. Switzerland ratified the Convention on 2 December 2016 and recognized the competence of the Committee to receive individual and inter-State communications, as it would not be possible to promote respect for human rights without effective monitoring mechanisms.

20. The implementation of the Convention at the national level required legislative changes, including the creation of the crime of enforced disappearance as a separate crime in the Criminal Code. In addition, a coordination network has been put in place between the different levels of the State (the Confederation and the cantons) in order to determine as soon as possible, in the case of an alleged enforced disappearance, whether the person concerned is subject to deprivation of liberty in Switzerland and, if that is the case, the whereabouts of the person. The implementing legislation entered into force at the same time as the Convention (1 January 2017).

21. Switzerland has not requested or received any assistance from the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner or any organ of the United Nations, any intergovernmental or non-governmental organization or the Working Group to become party to the Convention and implement it.

**Togo**

22. Togo signed the Convention on 27 October 2010 and ratified it on 21 July 2014. Togo takes measures to raise awareness of the Convention among the various actors. For this reason, Togo deems it still too premature to decide on recognizing the competence of the Committee to receive individual or inter-State communications. Togo has not benefited from technical assistance for the

ratification of the Convention and has not requested any assistance from civil society organizations or the national human rights institution for the implementation of the Convention.

**Uzbekistan**

23. Uzbekistan reports that accession to the Convention is considered premature by the relevant authorities, owing to the lack of the term "enforced disappearance" in national law and of its recognition as an offence with the corresponding criminal liability. Uzbekistan notes, however, that some of its laws and regulations enshrine important provisions aimed at the implementation of the resolution and already criminalize and punish several acts, including abduction (art. 137 of the Criminal Code), unlawful deprivation of liberty (art. 138), trafficking in persons (art. 135), improper exercise of authority (art. 206) and unlawful detention or remand in custody (art. 234).

24. Uzbekistan has neither requested nor received any assistance from the Secretary-General or the High Commissioner in preparation for accession to or ratification of the Convention. While it has not received technical assistance from any United Nations agencies or organizations to promote understanding and implementation of the Convention, Uzbekistan highlights that it is included in the law and human rights programmes of Tashkent State University of Law, the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Centre for Further Training of Jurists.

## IV. Activities of the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner

25. In paragraph 5 of its resolution 70/160, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner to increase their intensive efforts to assist States in becoming parties to the Convention, with a view to achieving universal adherence.

26. The Convention has been highlighted at all treaty-related events organized by the United Nations in New York since 2007, so as to promote accession or ratification and implementation. The Convention is also part of the treaty event for 2017.

27. The Secretary-General delivered a message on 30 August 2016 on the occasion of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances. He noted that all States had an obligation to investigate, prosecute and punish enforced disappearances, as well as to provide redress to its victims. He called upon States to acknowledge that family members and friends of the disappeared were also victims and to guarantee their right to full protection from any form of reprisals. He urged all Member States to ratify or accede to the Convention without delay and called upon the States parties to the Convention to fully implement it.

28. In February 2017, the Secretary-General delivered a message at the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention. He noted the importance of having a contemporary legal instrument to monitor, investigate and prevent enforced disappearances. Yet, despite its clear merits, the Convention had not attracted the number of ratifications that it deserved. He stressed that, with its membership of 56 States parties at that time, the Convention was deprived of the broad-based support that it required to meet its objectives and the hopes and expectations of the families who had fought so hard for its adoption. He urged all Governments to

reaffirm their commitment to the bedrock principle of human dignity: that no one should be subjected to enforced disappearance or held in secret detention.

29. OHCHR has continued to pursue its efforts to combat enforced disappearances and to achieve universal ratification of the Convention under the thematic priorities of "violence and insecurity" and "support for human rights mechanisms", as set out in the Office management plan for 2014-2017. Efforts have been focused on supporting States' action to ratify the Convention, providing training and capacity-building to States and civil society and raising awareness about the Convention.

30. In May 2017, presenting the OHCHR annual report for 2016, the High Commissioner referred to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which, he said, provided new impetus for advancing human rights and protecting civil society space, with its target on ensuring public access to information and protection of fundamental freedoms. He noted that States' progress in achieving that target would be evaluated in part by the number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates.

31. On 19 December 2016, the High Commissioner opened the first session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, convened in Geneva to implement article 27 of the Convention on the confirmation of the Committee as the monitoring body of the Convention. In his statement, he stressed that enforced disappearance remained a serious human rights challenge of concern to all. He noted that provisions on investigations, non-refoulement and extradition, secret detention, urgent action and inquiries meant that the Convention continued to be an innovative and versatile tool to prohibit, prevent and combat enforced disappearance. He called for its universal ratification and effective implementation.

32. On the occasion of the above-mentioned high-level plenary meeting, the High Commissioner set the bold objective of doubling the number of ratifications of the Convention within five years. His call was promptly taken up publicly by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Argentina and France. A trans-regional declaration supporting ratification was circulated among Member States, and signed by 49 of them, during the thirty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council.

33. In November 2016, OHCHR participated in a conference on the application of the Convention organized by the Office of the Prosecutor General of Lithuania, held in Vilnius. Judges, prosecutors, officials from various ministries, lawyers and representatives of non-governmental organizations attended.

34. OHCHR in Honduras provided technical assistance to the Government in respect of the review of the State party's report to the Committee held in March 2017.

35. OHCHR in Mexico continued to actively participate in the process of adoption of a general law on disappearance that is in line with international human rights standards. The law was approved by the Senate and is pending discussion in the Chamber of Deputies.

36. In addition, OHCHR in Mexico worked with non-governmental organizations and family members of disappeared persons to raise awareness of the international mechanisms available to them, in particular those through the Committee, including the urgent action procedure. It works together with the authorities to ensure that the urgent actions are an effective tool in the search for disappeared persons.

37. Furthermore, OHCHR in Mexico, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross, participated in the development of a law on the search for and recovery and identification of human remains in Coahuila.

38. OHCHR in Mexico supported the efforts of the federal police and Executive Commission for Victim Support to communicate to family members the stages of the identification processes of victims with a view to facilitating dialogue between victims and the authorities. OHCHR also participated in meetings between victims and the federal authorities in the States of Coahuila, Guerrero, Jalisco, San Luis Potosí, Tamaulipas and Veracruz.

39. In addition, OHCHR in Mexico provided technical assistance for the establishment of a specialized unit on disappearances, which became operational in July 2017, within the Office of the Attorney General of the State of Jalisco. It organized a capacity-building programme for the staff of the unit, which covered several subjects, including a specific session on international and regional human rights standards in relation to disappearances.

40. Furthermore, OHCHR in Mexico has continued to work on the case of the disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero, which occurred in 2014. In January 2017, OHCHR provided training on enforced disappearances and torture to the judges working on the case. In March, OHCHR issued a press release regarding the internal investigation in which it expressed regret that the irregularities that had surfaced had not been properly addressed by internal oversight mechanisms.

41. In Ecuador, the Human Rights Adviser facilitated the participation of civil society organizations in the review of the State party's report to the Committee.

42. In Sri Lanka, OHCHR continued to advocate and advise on the integration of the provisions of the Convention into national legislation.

43. The OHCHR Regional Office for Central America, together with the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, organized a forum in June 2017 on challenges and scope with regard to the protection of all persons against enforced disappearance, which provided training and advice to the States of the region so that they could fulfil their obligations under the Convention.

44. The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture continued to award grants to non-governmental entities providing assistance to families of victims of enforced disappearance and/or documenting cases of enforced disappearance, in line with the provisions of the Convention. In Peru, for example, the Fund supports three projects aimed at providing legal and/or psychological assistance. In Mexico, the Fund continues to support two projects aimed at providing legal aid. In Argentina, another project continues to be supported by the Fund with the aim of providing psychological, social and legal services, including DNA tests.

45. The Secretary-General and the High Commissioner both made references to allegations of enforced disappearances in reports, statements, press releases and press briefings relating to States parties and non-States parties to the Convention, demonstrating that the crime of enforced disappearance continues to occur and the importance of achieving universal ratification of the Convention.

46. In October 2016, in his report on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, the Secretary-General noted that international humanitarian and human rights violations, including enforced disappearances, had been reported across the region (S/2016/840, para. 13).

47. In December 2016, the Secretary-General, in his report on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, stated that he remained deeply alarmed by the human rights situation in the country. He noted that, during the reporting period, violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including enforced

disappearances, had continued to be perpetrated by all groups, mostly with impunity (S/2016/1011, paras. 33 and 80).

48. Also in December 2016, the Secretary-General, in his report on the situation in Mali, referred to the cases documented by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, including a case of enforced disappearance (S/2016/1137, para. 35).

49. In February 2017, on the occasion of the signature of the agreement on activities between the Government of Mexico and OHCHR in Mexico, the High Commissioner expressed the commitment of OHCHR to supporting more efforts to tackle impunity and ensure accountability in line with the recommendations that Mexico had received from international and regional human rights mechanisms, including legislation and policies on disappearances and torture. He also expressed commitment to the resolution of emblematic cases, such as the disappearance of the 43 students from Ayotzinapa. He reiterated his unflinching support for the victims and their families and readiness to support all efforts, so as to ensure that the facts were established and justice was done.

50. In March 2017, at the thirty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council, in a statement during a high-level panel discussion on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, the High Commissioner voiced his concern that countless people had suffered arbitrary detention, torture, kidnap and enforced disappearance in the Syrian Arab Republic and that OHCHR and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic had been refused access to the country.

51. In April 2017, the High Commissioner referred to reports indicating a major increase in the number of cases of enforced disappearance in Burundi between November 2016 and March 2017, as well as the discovery of dozens of unidentified bodies in various parts of the country during that time.

52. In May 2017, the High Commissioner referred to the lack of resources from which the disappearance and truth and reconciliation commissions in Nepal had suffered since the country's peace agreement had been reached more than 10 years previously. He expressed his concern about the country's failure to address impunity and to accomplish its obligations under international human rights law.

## V. Activities of the Committee

53. In accordance with article 27 of the Convention, the first session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention was convened at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 19 December 2016. The Conference held one meeting, during which it examined the functioning of the Committee and recognized that it efficiently monitored the implementation of the Convention (see CED/CSP/SR.1). The Conference adopted by consensus the decision that the Committee would continue to monitor the Convention in accordance with the functions defined in articles 28 to 36 of the Convention (see CED/CSP/2016/4).

54. The Committee took several steps to promote the ratification and implementation of the Convention and maintained its dialogue with the Working Group and other relevant mechanisms and stakeholders. More information is available in document A/72/56.

55. In all his public statements, the Chair of the Committee continued to promote the ratification of the Convention and to stress that ratification should be followed by its incorporation into the national legal order and its implementation. He also

continued to invite States parties that had not done so to accept the competence of the Committee under articles 31 and 32 of the Convention.

56. On the occasion of International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances (30 August 2016), the Committee and the Working Group issued a press release in which they expressed their concern at allegations of intimidation and reprisals against victims of enforced disappearance and those who reported their cases. They called upon States worldwide to prevent and eradicate enforced disappearances, including short-term enforced disappearances, and to ensure that relatives of persons deprived of their liberty were informed accurately and promptly of their detention. They also reiterated their call upon all States to ratify or accede to the Convention as a fundamental first step towards the prevention, and the ultimate termination, of the inadmissible practice of enforced disappearances.

57. On 5 October 2016, the Committee held its fifth annual meeting with the Working Group, through a videoconference with the Chair of the Working Group. The members of the two bodies identified common areas of concern, including the increasing number of so-called short-term enforced disappearances, non-State actors and attacks and reprisals against human rights defenders.

58. The Committee met Member States at public meetings on 7 October 2016 and 9 March 2017. It invited States parties to the Convention that had not yet submitted their reports and States that had neither signed nor ratified the Convention to do so and encouraged all States to accept the Committee's competence under articles 31 and 32. In addition, the Chair updated States on the work of the Committee.

59. On 7 October 2016, the Committee held a public meeting with a representative of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, who underlined the importance of the close cooperation between the Committee and national human rights institutions and the common priorities of the universal ratification of the Convention and States parties' compliance with their reporting obligations under article 29 (1).

60. On 7 October 2016 and 9 March 2017, the Committee also met representatives of non-governmental organizations and victims' associations to discuss general matters relating to the promotion and implementation of the Convention. The Committee welcomed the support of non-governmental organizations in encouraging States to ratify the Convention and underlined the importance of close cooperation in raising awareness.

61. On 17 February 2017, the Chair and a Vice-Chair of the Committee participated in the above-mentioned high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly dedicated to the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention.

62. The Committee, through its secretariat, continued to send reminders to States parties whose reports were overdue to encourage their prompt submission, bringing to their attention the guidelines on the form and content of reports under article 29 (1) to be submitted by States parties to the Convention (CED/C/2).

## VI. Activities of the Working Group

63. In September 2016, in its report to the Human Rights Council, the Working Group reiterated its calls upon States that had not signed and/or ratified the Convention to do so as soon as possible and to accept the competence of the Committee to receive individual cases under article 31 and inter-State complaints under article 32 of the Convention (A/HRC/33/51, para. 121). The Working Group

takes every opportunity to promote the ratification of the Convention, including during visits to States and bilateral meetings held with their representatives.

64. On 20 December 2016, the Working Group issued a press release in which it commended the States parties to the Convention on their decision to extend the mandate of the Committee.

65. On 17 February 2017, the Vice-Chair of the Working Group participated in the above-mentioned high-level plenary meeting, calling upon States parties to provide in good faith their firm support for the Convention and for the work of the Committee.

66. The Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group met, via teleconference, the Committee during the Committee's eleventh session, in October 2016, to exchange information on the activities by the two bodies working on the issue of enforced disappearance, including the Working Group's study on enforced disappearances and migration. At the meeting, the members highlighted the need to continue to make their coordination of activities more effective. They also exchanged information on past and forthcoming activities, including country visits, thematic issues and the review of States parties, and agreed on continuous cooperation to coordinate their agendas.

## VII. Activities of United Nations agencies and organizations and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations

67. A number of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations have undertaken efforts at the national, regional and global levels to disseminate information on the Convention, promote understanding of it, prepare for its entry into force and assist States parties in implementing their obligations under the instrument.

68. Regarding civil society, Amnesty International, in the briefings provided to the Human Rights Committee for the reviews of Pakistan and Thailand, recommended that the countries should, respectively, accede to and ratify the Convention and, for the review of Morocco, recommended that the country should accept the competence of the Committee regarding individual and inter-State complaints. In the briefing provided to the Committee against Torture for the review of Ireland, Amnesty International recommended that the country should ratify the Convention.

69. Amnesty International also made recommendations during the universal periodic review. During the twenty-sixth session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, it recommended that Haiti, Iceland, the Republic of Moldova, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Timor-Leste, Uganda, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Zimbabwe should ratify or accede to, without reservations, the Convention and accept the competence of the Committee under articles 31 and 32; it further recommended that Togo should accept the competence of the Committee under those articles. During the twenty-seventh session, Amnesty International recommended that Algeria, Bahrain, Finland, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland should ratify or accede to, without reservations, the Convention and accept the competence of the Committee under articles 31 and 32; it further recommended that Brazil and Morocco should accept the competence of the Committee. During the twenty-eighth session, Amnesty International recommended that Guatemala and Pakistan should ratify, without reservations, the Convention and accept the competence of the Committee under articles 31 and 32; it further

recommended that Peru should accept the competence of the Committee under article 32.

70. The Asian Federation against Involuntary Disappearances is a federation of 14 organizations working directly on the issue of enforced disappearance in 10 South and South-East Asian countries. Representatives of the Federation have actively lobbied at the national, regional and international levels for the ratification of the Convention in Asia and the recognition of the competence of the Committee. The Federation contributed to the universal periodic review of India, Indonesia and the Philippines and advocated the ratification of the Convention by those countries. Representatives of the Federation organized public demonstrations and participated in conferences, seminars and public events to promote understanding of the Convention. The Federation released statements on the occasion of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances in 2016 and International Week of the Disappeared in May 2017 in which it reiterated its call for the ratification of the Convention. The Federation regularly provides substantive information on cases of enforced disappearance to the Committee and the Working Group.

71. Geneva for Human Rights — Global Training is an organization devoted to human rights. It actively lobbied for the confirmation of the Committee as the monitoring body of the Convention during the first session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention. Geneva for Human Rights circulated a memorandum noting the achievements of the Committee among non-governmental organizations and through social media. Together with the International Service for Human Rights, it organized a preparatory meeting for the Conference for non-governmental organizations. The organization also coordinated a joint statement by eight international non-governmental organizations and read out statements from national non-governmental organizations, including the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo. On 15 March 2017, it organized a workshop as a platform for reflection on ways to strengthen the prevention of and protection from enforced disappearance. Among other issues, the need to strengthen the non-governmental organization network working on enforced disappearances and support for the universal ratification of the Convention were discussed.

72. The International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances, which comprises 56 non-governmental organizations, has been globally promoting its mandate to lobby actively for the universal ratification and implementation of the Convention, recognition of the competence of the Committee under articles 31 and 32 and the enactment of national laws that criminalize enforced disappearance. Representatives of the Coalition organized and participated in public events, seminars and conferences promoting the Convention to a wide range of audiences, from Governments to civil society and other stakeholders. The Coalition contributed to the universal periodic review of India, Indonesia and the Philippines and advocated the ratification of the Convention by those countries. In its contribution, the Coalition analysed some possible causes of the slow pace of ratification of the Convention. The Coalition released statements on the occasion of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances in 2016 and the International Week of the Disappeared in May 2017 in which it called for the universal ratification of the Convention.

73. REDRESS represents numerous victims of enforced disappearance in litigation against a range of countries in various forums, including the Human Rights Committee and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. It consistently refers to the Convention in litigation, in submissions regarding implementation, in alternative reports submitted to monitoring mechanisms and in training to civil society. REDRESS engaged with the Human Rights Committee and the Government of Nepal regarding cases of enforced disappearances that occurred during the

conflict in that country. Representatives also contributed to the ongoing development of guidelines on enforced disappearances in Africa, which seek to apply the Convention's provisions to the African context.

74. TRIAL International, a member of the International Coalition against Enforced Disappearances, carried out several activities to disseminate information on the Convention, promote its understanding, assist States parties in implementing their obligations under that instrument and encourage other States to become parties to the Convention and to recognize the competence of the Committee.

75. Throughout 2016 and 2017, TRIAL International has been submitting follow-up reports on the status of implementation of the recommendations contained in the views of the Human Rights Committee on cases of enforced disappearances in Nepal that had been previously lodged by TRIAL International. Between 2016 and 2017, the Human Rights Committee issued its views on communications against Nepal and against Bosnia and Herzegovina, all concerning cases of enforced disappearance lodged by TRIAL International. In all communications lodged before the Human Rights Committee by TRIAL International, reference is made to the Convention as the highest standard in international human rights law on the subject of enforced disappearance.

76. In February 2017, TRIAL International, the Fundación para la Justicia y el Estado Democrático de Derecho and a coalition of associations of relatives of disappeared persons from Central America submitted a report to the Committee on Enforced Disappearances on the implementation of the concluding observations on Mexico issued by the Committee in February 2015.

77. TRIAL International organized several training sessions for lawyers and human rights activists in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nepal, during which the Convention and the mandate and functioning of the Committee were thoroughly analysed. Representatives also published articles to promote the understanding of the Convention and participated in a series of conferences and seminars on the subject.

## VIII. Conclusion

78. **The Secretary-General strongly encourages all States that are not yet parties to the Convention to take the measures necessary to do so and to accept the competence of the Committee under articles 31 and 32 of the Convention. The Secretary-General and the High Commissioner will continue their intensive efforts to assist States in becoming parties to the Convention and in ensuring its full implementation.**

# Annex

## States that have signed, ratified or acceded to the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance as at 1 July 2017

| *State* | *Date of signature* | *Date of accession or ratification* |
|---|---|---|
| Albania[a] | 6 February 2007 | 8 November 2007 |
| Algeria[a] | 6 February 2007 | |
| Angola | 24 September 2014 | |
| Argentina[a] | 6 February 2007 | 14 December 2007 |
| Armenia | 10 April 2007 | 24 January 2011 |
| Austria[a] | 6 February 2007 | 7 June 2012 |
| Azerbaijan | 6 February 2007 | |
| Belgium[a] | 6 February 2007 | 2 June 2011 |
| Belize | | 14 August 2015[b] |
| Benin | 19 March 2010 | |
| Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | 6 February 2007 | 17 December 2008 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina[a] | 6 February 2007 | 30 March 2012 |
| Brazil | 6 February 2007 | 29 November 2010 |
| Bulgaria | 24 September 2008 | |
| Burkina Faso | 6 February 2007 | 3 December 2009 |
| Burundi | 6 February 2007 | |
| Cabo Verde | 6 February 2007 | |
| Cambodia | | 27 June 2013[b] |
| Cameroon | 6 February 2007 | |
| Central African Republic[b] | | 11 October 2016 |
| Chad | 6 February 2007 | |
| Chile[a] | 6 February 2007 | 8 December 2009 |
| Colombia | 27 September 2007 | 11 July 2012 |
| Comoros | 6 February 2007 | |
| Congo | 6 February 2007 | |
| Costa Rica | 6 February 2007 | 16 February 2012 |
| Croatia | 6 February 2007 | |
| Czechia[a] | 19 July 2016 | 8 February 2017 |

| *State* | *Date of signature* | *Date of accession or ratification* |
|---|---|---|
| Cuba[a] | 6 February 2007 | 2 February 2009 |
| Cyprus | 6 February 2007 | |
| Denmark | 25 September 2007 | |
| Ecuador[a] | 24 May 2007 | 20 October 2009 |
| Finland | 6 February 2007 | |
| France[a] | 6 February 2007 | 23 September 2008 |
| Gabon | 25 September 2007 | 19 January 2011 |
| Germany[a] | 26 September 2007 | 24 September 2009 |
| Ghana | 6 February 2007 | |
| Greece | 1 October 2008 | 9 July 2015 |
| Grenada | 6 February 2007 | |
| Guatemala | 6 February 2007 | |
| Guinea-Bissau | 24 September 2013 | |
| Haiti | 6 February 2007 | |
| Honduras | 6 February 2007 | 1 April 2008 |
| Iceland | 1 October 2008 | |
| India | 6 February 2007 | |
| Indonesia | 27 September 2010 | |
| Iraq | | 23 November 2010[b] |
| Ireland | 29 March 2007 | |
| Italy | 3 July 2007 | 8 October 2015 |
| Japan[a] | 6 February 2007 | 23 July 2009 |
| Kazakhstan | | 27 February 2009[b] |
| Kenya | 6 February 2007 | |
| Lao People's Democratic Republic | 29 September 2008 | |
| Lebanon | 6 February 2007 | |
| Lesotho | 22 September 2010 | 6 December 2013 |
| Liechtenstein | 1 October 2007 | |
| Lithuania[a] | 6 February 2007 | 14 August 2013 |
| Luxembourg | 6 February 2007 | |
| Madagascar | 6 February 2007 | |

| *State* | *Date of signature* | *Date of accession or ratification* |
|---|---|---|
| Maldives | 6 February 2007 | |
| Mali[a] | 6 February 2007 | 1 July 2009 |
| Malta | 6 February 2007 | 27 March 2015 |
| Mauritania | 27 September 2011 | 3 October 2012 |
| Mexico | 6 February 2007 | 18 March 2008 |
| Monaco | 6 February 2007 | |
| Mongolia | 6 February 2007 | 12 February 2015 |
| Montenegro[a] | 6 February 2007 | 20 September 2011 |
| Morocco | 6 February 2007 | 14 May 2013 |
| Mozambique | 24 December 2008 | |
| Netherlands[a] | 29 April 2008 | 23 March 2011 |
| Niger | 6 February 2007 | 24 July 2015 |
| Nigeria | | 27 July 2009[b] |
| Norway | 21 December 2007 | |
| Palau | 20 September 2011 | |
| Panama | 25 September 2007 | 24 June 2011 |
| Paraguay | 6 February 2007 | 3 August 2010 |
| Peru | | 26 September 2012 |
| Poland | 25 June 2013 | |
| Portugal[a] | 6 February 2007 | 27 January 2014 |
| Republic of Moldova | 6 February 2007 | |
| Romania | 3 December 2008 | |
| Samoa | 6 February 2007 | 27 November 2012 |
| Senegal | 6 February 2007 | 11 December 2008 |
| Serbia[a] | 6 February 2007 | 18 May 2011 |
| Seychelles[b] | | 18 January 2017 |
| Sierra Leone | 6 February 2007 | |
| Slovakia | 26 September 2007 | 15 December 2014 |
| Slovenia | 26 September 2007 | |
| Spain[a] | 27 September 2007 | 24 September 2009 |
| Sri Lanka[a] | 10 December 2015 | 25 May 2016 |

| *State* | *Date of signature* | *Date of accession or ratification* |
|---|---|---|
| Saint Vincent and the Grenadines | 29 March 2010 | |
| Swaziland | 25 September 2007 | |
| Sweden | 6 February 2007 | |
| Switzerland[a] | 19 January 2011 | 2 December 2016 |
| Thailand | 9 January 2012 | |
| The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia | 6 February 2007 | |
| Togo | 27 October 2010 | 21 July 2014 |
| Tunisia | 6 February 2007 | 29 June 2011 |
| Uganda | 6 February 2007 | |
| Ukraine[a] | | 12 August 2015[b] |
| United Republic of Tanzania | 29 September 2008 | |
| Uruguay[a] | 6 February 2007 | 4 March 2009 |
| Vanuatu | 6 February 2007 | |
| Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)[a] | 21 October 2008 | |
| Zambia | 27 September 2010 | 4 April 2011 |

[a] States that have made declarations recognizing the competence of the Committee under articles 31 and/or 32 of the Convention. The full text of the declarations and reservations made by States parties is available from http://treaties.un.org.

[b] Accession.

United Nations A/72/281

General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 August 2017

Original: English

**Seventy-second session**
Item 73 (c) of the provisional agenda*
**Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives**

# Note by the Secretariat transmitting the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi

By its resolution 33/24, adopted on 30 September 2016, the Human Rights Council created the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi to, inter alia:

(a) conduct a thorough investigation into human rights violations and abuses in Burundi since April 2015, including on their extent and whether they may constitute international crimes;

(b) identify alleged perpetrators of those crimes;

(c) present its report to the General Assembly and other relevant international bodies.

Pursuant to that request, the final report of the Commission will be contained in A/HRC/36/54, which will be submitted to the thirty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council, to be held in September 2017.

* A/72/150.

17-13330 (E) 080817

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United Nations A/72/281*

General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 August 2017

Original: English

**Seventy-second session**
Item 73 (c) of the provisional agenda**
**Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives**

# Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi

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Pursuant to the resolution, the final report of the Commission will be contained in document A/HRC/36/54, which will be submitted to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-sixth session, to be held in September 2017.

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* Reissued for technical reasons on 15 August 2017.
** A/72/150.

17-13330* (E) 170817

Please recycle

United Nations A/72/282

General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 August 2017

Original: English

**Seventy-second session**
Item 24 (b) of the provisional agenda*
**Eradication of poverty and other development issues**

# Women in development

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The focus of the present report, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 70/219, is on measures taken at the national level to scale up efforts to accelerate the transition of women from informal to formal employment, including access to decent work and social protection, and support the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work by women, including through sustained investments in the care economy. In the report, the Secretary-General discusses financing for those actions and highlights the results achieved, lessons learned and opportunities for upscaling and replication. Recommendations for consideration by the Assembly are also provided.

* A/72/150.

17-12354 (E) 180817

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# I. Introduction

1. The year 2015 marked a historic point, with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in which it is recognized that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out a comprehensive set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets that are universal, integrated and indivisible. It is also recognized in the 2030 Agenda that realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all Goals and targets. Efforts to achieve Goal 5, on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, together with the gender-responsive implementation of the entire Agenda, are of critical importance for women and girls in development.

2. In the 2030 Agenda, it is emphasized that the achievement of full human potential and sustainable development is not possible if women and girls, who represent half of humanity, continue to be denied their full human rights and opportunities. Rather, it would require, among other things, equal access to economic resources and political participation, equal access to good-quality education, equal pay for work of equal value and equal opportunities with men for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels. It is also underlined in the 2030 Agenda that the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in its implementation is crucial. For example, targets in the 2030 Agenda are aimed at realizing women's equal rights to economic resources, equal access to decent work and social protection and equal access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources.

3. Given that the eradication of poverty in all its forms is a central commitment in the 2030 Agenda, ensuring full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men takes on heightened importance. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its sixty-first session, provided a road map of action for women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work. In it, the Commission elaborated on the linkages between the various dimensions of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and on how those linkages affect women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work. Among the areas addressed were gender gaps in labour force participation and structural barriers to women's economic empowerment, including discriminatory laws and policies, gender stereotypes and negative social norms. As a result of the growing informality of work and mobility of women workers, specific actions, together with social protection, are called for to facilitate women's transition from informal to formal employment. The Commission also outlined concrete measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work done by women and girls, thereby reinforcing the 2030 Agenda.

4. The present report, on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 70/219, builds on those gains. Its focus is on areas to further enhance women's capacity as agents of change in national development and poverty eradication. Emphasis is placed on policies to accelerate the transition of women from informal to formal employment, including access to decent work opportunities and social protection. Attention is also given to the recognition, reduction and redistribution of the unpaid care and domestic work performed disproportionately by women, including through sustained investments in the care economy. Based on input

received from 24 Member States and 5 United Nations system entities,[1] the Secretary-General reviews measures taken by Governments and support provided by the United Nations system to address those issues.[2] The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

## II. Background

5. Women's empowerment and gender equality are at the very heart of human rights as enshrined in international human rights treaties and conventions, inter alia, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

6. Twenty-two years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,[3] considerable progress has been made in closing gender gaps, especially in health and education. Girls born today can expect to live an average of 73 years, about four years longer than in 1995. The global maternal mortality rate has dropped by 42 per cent in 20 years, and the global gender gap among primary school-age children has virtually closed.[4] More women have gained greater legal rights to access employment and to own and inherit property. Yet, there is still much to do to achieve the full and equal participation of women in the economy and in society.

7. Around the world, economies continue to grapple with the lingering effects of the 2007-2009 global financial and economic crises. While there has been modest growth in developed economies, growth in emerging and developing economies has been declining for the past five years, dropping from 5.4 per cent in 2012 to 4.1 per cent in 2016. Recent projections by the International Monetary Fund indicate that growth in those economies is expected to rise only marginally over the next two years.[5] Persistent structural constraints, such as low productivity, wage stagnation and rising income inequality, remain challenges in far too many developing economies and pose a challenge to stronger and sustained recovery.

8. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO),[6] women remain especially affected by the slow pace of global economic recovery, and gender gaps

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[1] Contributions were received from Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Finland, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Mozambique, Qatar, Romania, Slovenia, Sudan, Togo, Turkey and Zambia. The following United Nations system entities also provided input: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).

[2] The present report also draws considerably on the work of the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, in particular its first and second reports, entitled "Leave no one behind: a call to action for gender equality and women's economic empowerment" (New York, 2016) and "Leave no one behind: taking action for transformational change on women's economic empowerment" (New York, 2017).

[3] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women*, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[4] Clinton Foundation and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, "No ceilings: the full participation report" (2015).

[5] International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook: Gaining Momentum?* (Washington, D.C., 2017).

[6] See International Labour Organization (ILO), *Women at Work: Trends 2016* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2016) and *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2017* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2017).

in the world of work remain widespread. Globally, the labour force participation rate for women was just over 49.5 per cent in 2016, compared with 76.1 per cent for men. Given current trends, the female labour force participation rate was expected to decline to 49.4 per cent in 2017, with no improvements anticipated for 2018. In 2017, women in emerging economies were expected to face the largest gender gap in participation rates, at nearly 31 per cent, followed by those in developed countries, at just over 16 per cent, and those in developing countries, at 12 per cent.

9. Gender gaps in labour force participation rates will be the highest in the Arab States, Northern Africa and Southern Asia, where they are expected to exceed 50 per cent. Those regions also have the lowest rates of female labour force participation, according to ILO.

10. Even when women do participate in labour markets, they are less likely than their male counterparts to find a job. In 2016, the global unemployment rate for women was 6.3 per cent, up marginally from 6.2 per cent in 2015. By comparison, the unemployment rate for men remained unchanged, at 5.5 per cent, during the same period.

11. According to ILO, pervasive occupational segregation, which exists across all countries and regions, is a major driver of the gender pay gap, which stands at approximately 23 per cent globally. The fact that women and men tend to be employed in different occupations or positions of seniority is a key factor in women's socioeconomic disadvantage. Far too many women remain concentrated in the informal economy, in domestic work and in low-paid, casual work. In 32 of the 41 countries for which data are available, approximately 80 per cent of women were in informal, non-agricultural employment, compared with 70 per cent for men.

12. According to the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, women are overrepresented in the informal economy for multiple reasons, including inadequate access to education and training. Adverse norms, discriminatory laws, the lack of legal protection and the lack of access to financial, digital and property assets are systemic barriers that undermine women's opportunities in all aspects of work. Adverse norms can limit women's access to work by differentiating the types of work done by women and men and by constraining women's mobility outside the home. They can also devalue women's work through justifications as to why women's and men's rights to equal remuneration, equal respect at work and equal access to land and property are not realized. Ninety per cent of countries have at least one gender-differentiated law. In all, 943 gender-differentiated laws have been documented across 170 countries.

13. In addition, a key driver of women's predominance in the informal economy is their disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work. According to the High-level Panel, women do over 75 per cent of all unpaid care and domestic work globally. The extent of women's unpaid care and domestic work means that they are often only able to access informal employment or are excluded from work entirely. Studies show that women working in informal enterprises reported unpaid care and domestic work as the reason they have taken this type of employment.[7]

14. The ability to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment is powerfully shaped by the overall economic environment. The design and implementation of macroeconomic policies are thus significant determinants for accelerating the empowerment of women, especially those who are the most marginalized. Those policies can make a significant contribution towards the

[7] Maria Lopez-Ruiz and others, "Informal employment, unpaid care work, and health status in Spanish-speaking Central American countries: a gender-based approach", *International Journal of Public Health*, vol. 62, No. 2 (March 2017), pp. 209-218.

delivery of the commitments of Member States outlined in the 2030 Agenda, by promoting economic growth that is inclusive, sustainable and capable of creating full and productive employment and by promoting decent work for all women and men.

## III. Accelerating the transition of women from informal work to productive employment

15. According to the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, many of the 1 billion people living in poverty around the world work informally, and a large number of them are women. Although there is no commonly accepted definition of informal employment across countries, there is a broad understanding that informal work includes considerable diversity in terms of workers, enterprises and entrepreneurs. Workers in informal employment can include unregistered workers, own-account workers, casual and seasonal workers, and home-based and domestic workers. Of the 67 million domestic workers employed globally, 54 million are women, accounting for a significant share of all informal workers.

16. Even if informal employment is critical for the livelihoods of a large majority of women, such work fails to meet the criteria of decent work, which is defined as "productive work in which rights are protected, which generates an adequate income, with adequate social protection".[8] Decent work addresses four elements that are key to advancing women's empowerment: the promotion of standards, fundamental principles and rights at work; decent employment creation; the enhancement of social protection; and the strengthening of social dialogue.[9]

17. Among women workers in the non-agricultural sector, more than four out of five in South Asia, and about three out of four in sub-Saharan Africa, are informally employed. The type of informal work varies considerably across regions: most non-agricultural work in sub-Saharan Africa is self-employment, whereas in Central Asia, it is mainly wage employment for both formal and informal businesses, as indicated by the High-level Panel.

18. Workers in informal employment typically encounter decent work deficits, including a lack of access to basic infrastructure and childcare, to education and skills training and to financial and health services, including occupational health and safety. Many of those deficits are more severe for women than for men.

19. According to the High-level Panel, women working in informal employment are also constrained by the lack of voice to exercise influence and bargaining power, the lack of visibility, as reflected in the paucity of data and evidence on informal work, and the lack of legal identity documents or recognition. For such reasons, the contributions of millions of women in informal employment to national economies go unrecognized and undervalued.

### A. Legal, regulatory and labour market reforms, including access to decent work

20. Bringing workers and enterprises in the informal economy under the protection of labour laws and standards would be a major step towards decent work.

[8] International Labour Organization (ILO), *Decent Work: Report of the Director-General*, International Labour Conference, 87th Session (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1999).

[9] ILO, *Decent Work Indicators: Guidelines for Producers and Users of Statistical and Legal Framework Indicators — ILO Manual*, 2nd ed. (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2013).

The benefits that workers derive from labour legislation and regulation include greater income security and financial stability, better training, fewer work-related accidents and increased access to health services. Improved labour standards can also be self-financing for employers, when, for instance, complying with legislation on working hours results in higher productivity and less absenteeism.[10]

21. Furthermore, research shows that strengthening collective bargaining rights can play a critical role in addressing low pay, boosting workers' morale and productivity, promoting a safe working environment and improving women's wages, thus reducing gender wage gaps. For instance, in recent years, as reported by ILO in *Women at Work*,[6] trade unions have also engaged in significant national and international campaigns to promote decent work for domestic workers, both before and after the adoption by ILO of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), which sets labour standards for domestic workers.

22. International labour standards often set the framework for the application of rights at the national level. The Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), the Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177) and the aforementioned Domestic Workers Convention are ILO instruments that are especially pertinent for women working in informal employment. Globally, only 10 per cent of the 43.6 million women employed as domestic workers enjoy labour protection to the same extent as other workers, according to the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. Following the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, 30 countries successfully extended labour or social protections to domestic workers. The adoption of such legal reforms and labour legislation are crucial to accelerating the transition of women from informal employment to decent work.

## B. Gender-responsive social protection policies

23. Social protection is one of the key features of decent work. However, evidence shows that 73 per cent of the world's population has no, or only partial, access to social protection. Women are often overrepresented among those who lack access to social protection.[11] Globally, less than 40 per cent of women who are employed are covered under mandatory maternity cash benefit schemes. Owing to the ineffective enforcement and implementation of laws in some regions, the effective coverage is far lower: only 28 per cent of women in employment worldwide are protected through maternity cash benefits that provide some income security during the final stages of pregnancy and after childbirth.[12] Without income security, either from earnings or from social transfers, women and their families risk falling into poverty, depleting their assets in response to shocks and engaging in distress sales of labour to meet immediate subsistence needs.

24. The impact of social protection on reducing poverty by increasing household income is well documented.[13] Many countries, for instance, have facilitated the

[10] ILO, *The Informal Economy and Decent Work: A Policy Resource Guide — Supporting Transitions to Formality* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2013).

[11] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (New York, 2015).

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

access of domestic workers and those who work in the informal economy to social security schemes, including unemployment insurance and maternity provisions.[14]

25. Other countries have implemented the Social Protection Floors Initiative, which aims to close gaps in social protection coverage and holds significant promise for women. A social protection floor is defined as a set of minimum guarantees, including basic income security for children, working-age adults, older people and people with disabilities, as well as health care for all, including maternity care.[15] However, the integration of women's specific risks and constraints in the design of social protection floors has been uneven.[16] Differences between women's and men's exposure to labour markets and their unequal distribution of time, responsibilities and power within households are some of the key factors that require consideration when designing gender-responsive social protection systems.

26. Even as many countries in the world are undertaking efforts to expand social protection to a wider proportion of the population, fiscal consolidation in the context of crises means social protection expenditures have generally been declining.[15] That decline comes on top of the already low level of expenditures on social protection, over time. For instance, evidence from 25 countries in the Asia-Pacific region shows that public social spending as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) averages between 3 and 7 per cent, a relatively low ratio in comparison with countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which spend, on average, 21 per cent of GDP.[17] However, even in the poorest countries, options exist to expand financing and generate resources to invest in social protection for women and girls.[18] Such measures are essential for realizing the human rights of all women and men, girls and boys, and for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda.

## C. Gender-responsive macroeconomic policies and inclusive growth strategies

27. The transition of women from informal to full and productive employment including decent work, cannot be accelerated without sustainable job creation. However, in many developing economies, despite moderate to high rates of economic growth, employment growth in the formal economy has been low.[19] For instance, while the economies of the least developed countries expanded annually at

[14] Social Protection Department of ILO, "Social protection for domestic workers: key policy trends and statistics", Social Protection Policy Papers, No. 16 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2016).

[15] ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2014/2015: Building Economic Recovery, Inclusive Development and Social Justice* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2014).

[16] UN-Women, "Making national social protection floors work for women", Policy Brief, No. 1 (New York, 2015).

[17] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *A Decade of Social Protection Development in Selected Asian Countries* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2017).

[18] Isabel Ortiz, Matthew Cummins and Kalaivani Karunanethy, "Fiscal space for social protection and the Sustainable Development Goals: options to expand social investments in 187 countries", Extension of Social Security Working Paper, No. 48 (Geneva and New York, International Labour Office, United Nations Children's Fund and UN-Women, 2017).

[19] Rizwanul Islam, "The challenge of jobless growth in developing countries: an analysis with cross-country data", occasional paper, No. 1 (Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, 2010).

a rate of 7.5 per cent during the decade before the 2008 financial crisis, employment growth per annum was just 2.9 per cent between 2002 and 2012.[20]

28. This pattern of jobless growth is incompatible with the conditions necessary for expanding or accelerating the economic empowerment of women.[19] The quantity and quality of employment — a fundamental aspect of women's economic empowerment — must be a key policy objective of economic growth strategies. Policies that promote investments in sectors of the economy that increase labour absorption and industrial policies that support high-productivity and labour-intensive economic activities can expand productive employment opportunities for women.[10]

29. Macroeconomic policies are important instruments in this context. They can create an enabling environment that encourages improvements in the quantity and quality of paid employment for women. Public investments in social care infrastructure, for instance, can be a self-sustaining way of creating more productive employment opportunities for women.[21] Investments in basic physical infrastructure and transport services can enhance the productivity of women's informal enterprises.[22]

30. Monetary and financial sector policies can also expand economic opportunities for women by directing credit to women-owned enterprises and to small and medium-sized enterprises that employ large numbers of women. In some countries, for example, the central bank operates financing programmes, including microfinance, targeting small and medium-sized enterprises, and mandates that a certain share of loans be made to women entrepreneurs.[23] Macroeconomic policies must therefore look beyond economic growth and include a broader set of objectives, including creating productive employment, enhancing informal livelihoods and ensuring basic living standards.

31. In the absence of job-rich economic growth and productive employment opportunities, access to paid work for most women remains anchored in the informal economy. Yet the contribution of the informal economy to economic growth remains largely unacknowledged. Including informal activities in national accounts can provide a more comprehensive assessment of national wealth, which is important for framing policy responses. Accounting for the contribution of the informal economy will reveal the full extent of women's contribution to economic growth.

32. Given the size of the informal economy, and the concentration of women workers in it, its omission from macroeconomic policies means that policy responses can be suboptimal from the perspective of women's empowerment. For instance, since employment in the informal economy typically expands during crises, it is often assumed that workers in informal employment fare relatively well compared to those in the formal economy. Yet the impact of reduced demand, fluctuating prices and exchange rates on informal enterprises and workers has often been neglected.[24] For those reasons, if macroeconomic policies and economic growth strategies are to facilitate women's economic empowerment, it is essential to

[20] World Bank, World Development Indicators database, Washington, D.C.

[21] International Trade Union Confederation, "Investing in the care economy: a gender analysis of employment stimulus in seven OECD countries" (Brussels, 2016).

[22] Martha Alter Chen, *Informal Economy Monitoring Study Sector Report: Home-Based Workers* (Cambridge, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing, 2014).

[23] Alliance for Financial Inclusion, "Expanding women's financial inclusion in Bangladesh through MSME finance policies", case study, No. 5 (Kuala Lumpur, Alliance for Financial Inclusion SME Finance Working Group, 2017).

[24] Martha A. Chen, "Macroeconomic policy, informal employment and gender", forthcoming.

distinguish between the different types of employment for women workers: formal and informal, wage work and self-employment. Paying inadequate attention to the impact of macroeconomic policy on the informal economy can lead to unforeseen consequences for many women workers.

33. Creating the conditions for decent work and expanding social protection coverage for women will require a scaling-up of public investments. This, in turn, will require maximizing fiscal space, since current budgetary allocations for those purposes are insufficient in many developing countries. It will also require the protection, prioritization and sequencing of public expenditures for such investments. In this context, gender-responsive budgets are important tools for influencing fiscal policy.[25] At present, gender-responsive budgeting initiatives have been introduced in more than 80 countries. The implementation of gender-responsive budgeting has helped to raise government accountability towards women's rights and to increase efficiency and transparency in budget policies and processes to promote women's empowerment and gender equality.[26]

# IV. Measures taken by Member States and support provided by United Nations entities to accelerate the transition of women from informal to formal employment

34. Many Member States and United Nations system entities have prioritized the creation of productive employment and decent work as key policy objectives. While some policies do not directly target women, they focus on the sectors where women are disproportionately represented and face persistent discrimination. Such interventions include: (a) implementing legislative and labour market reforms to raise incomes and promote equal rights for workers in both informal and formal employment; (b) implementing employment programmes to enable the transition from informal to formal employment; (c) increasing women's access to land, digital technology and finance, in order to promote women's entrepreneurship; and (d) expanding access to social protection for all women and men, regardless of employment status.

35. Zambia reported that formal employment had been steadily declining during the past decade, pushing more people to seek employment in the informal economy. In that context, the Employment Act of 2015 increased protection for informal workers by limiting casual contracts to no more than six months and short-term contracts to no more than twelve months and prohibiting employment dismissal on the basis of sex, marital status or pregnancy. In addition to protecting workers' rights, the Government has made efforts to boost labour demand through its national Industrialization and Job Creation Strategy (2012-2016), which was aimed at creating 1 million jobs in the formal economy. Those combined efforts are more likely to benefit women, who represent most of the workers in the informal economy.

36. In Qatar, government efforts have focused on the rights of women in both formal and informal employment. The implementation of the Civil Human Resources Law of 2016 mandates that all employers grant nursing mothers a daily minimum of two hours to breastfeed their children until the age of two. At the same

[25] Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres and UN-Women, "Referentes conceptuales de los presupuestos con perspectiva de género" [Conceptual references for gender-responsive budgeting], policy brief (2014).

[26] Janet Stotsky, "Gender budgeting: fiscal context and current outcomes", IMF Working Paper, No. 16/149 (IMF, 2016).

time, the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry has focused on women's entrepreneurship, by providing women with training in financial literacy, business management and information and communications technology.

37. Cambodia and Jordan have focused their efforts on reforms to raise the incomes of low-income households by increasing the minimum wage for all workers in 2017 by 9 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively. Since women tend to be overrepresented in low-paid work, minimum wage legislation can be a powerful instrument for improving their livelihoods.

38. Cuba continues to enforce legislation to protect workers' rights, including for those in the informal economy. Decree-Law No. 340 of the Cuban Labour Code guarantees access to public spaces for self-employed women workers, women traders and members of non-agricultural cooperatives, women artists and women in other informal occupations. The legislation also guarantees paid sick leave for prenatal and postnatal care, paid maternity leave and flexible working arrangements for parents with young children.

39. Togo focused its efforts on increasing access to finance for women-owned enterprises through the establishment, in 2014, of a national fund for financial inclusion. In addition, the national Youth Employment Project includes incentives such as wage subsidies to encourage private employers to hire young women who have recently graduated from universities and vocational schools.

40. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, under its Gender Action Plan for 2013-2017, a $3 million fund was established, providing start-up grants to 268 women entrepreneurs in the informal economy and trained 300 women in financial literacy and business management.

41. In the Sudan, efforts to promote women's transition from informal to formal employment focused mainly on increasing women's access to finance. Banking System Law No. 18 of 2007 mandated that 70 per cent of the central bank's funds be allocated to rural finance. At least one third of those funds are earmarked for women-owned enterprises in the informal and formal economies. In 2016, more than 80,000 women entrepreneurs benefited from the initiative.

42. In Barbados, the Community Technology Programme provided information technology training to 55,000 workers in informal enterprises, with women making up 85 per cent of the beneficiaries. The training helped to expand women's employment opportunities beyond the tourism sector and into information and telecommunication services.

43. In 2016, efforts by China to facilitate women's transition from informal to formal employment included business skills training for 4 million women and the establishment of a $45 billion fund that has provided concessional microcredit loans to 5.76 million women. The country's efforts have also focused on South-South cooperation.

44. In Azerbaijan, government efforts have focused on enhancing skills for women in both informal and formal employment. The establishment of women's resource centres around the country, including in rural areas, is providing women with free access to training in business management, financial literacy and entrepreneurship. The women's resource centres also serve as safe spaces for victims of domestic violence.

45. In Turkey, the continued implementation of the component of its Action Plan (2014-2018) on increasing the participation of women's labour and employment has played a key role in the Government's efforts to expand women's access to decent

employment. Those efforts have focused on strengthening women's skills, including through training in business management and entrepreneurship.

46. Mozambique created its Productive Social Action Programme, a public work programme that provides short-term employment opportunities for many women. Government efforts have also focused on agricultural producers in rural areas. In 2016, 308,686 women farmers benefited from training in agricultural technology, through the integrated programme for the transfer of agricultural technology.

47. In Argentina, the Government has focused on increasing coverage for social security and social insurance as an important mechanism for improving the livelihoods of women in informal employment.

48. United Nations system entities have worked with development partners to support the transition of women from informal to formal employment and decent work in many countries. The International Fund for Agricultural Development has focused its efforts on capacity development for women, including providing training in agricultural extension, value chains and rural finance in sub-Saharan Africa. It is also tackling the issue of high youth unemployment by targeting young women and men from rural areas who are migrating to cities in search of employment opportunities. Such efforts include vocational and technical training.

49. The International Telecommunication Union has worked to bridge the digital gender divide in 138 countries. Since its launch in 2011, 270,000 girls from 166 countries have participated in activities geared towards developing their entrepreneurial skills through workshops that teach coding and mobile application development. The Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age is a multi-stakeholder initiative implemented by the Union, together with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), aimed at promoting awareness and building political commitment to achieve digital gender equality at both the global and the national levels.

50. Women's access to decent work and social protection remains a key area of work for UN-Women. In Paraguay, technical and legal support from UN-Women in 2016 led to the adoption of a decree on domestic work by the Ministry of Labour. The decree raised the minimum wage and extended social security, health insurance and retirement benefits to the 16 per cent of women who work as domestic workers, in compliance with the Domestic Workers Convention of ILO. The programmatic efforts of UN-Women have also focused on the decent work agenda. In that context, the entity has developed a flagship programme on promoting decent employment and income security for women through inclusive growth policies and investments in the care economy, which supports Member States with technical and capacity development assistance to formulate and implement gender-responsive macroeconomic policies and programmes for employment, social protection and unpaid care and domestic work.

## V. Recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work by women

51. Unpaid care and domestic work has emerged as a key issue for women in development because it underpins gender inequality. To a significant extent, women's empowerment will depend on closing the gender gap in unpaid work and investing in good-quality care services and decent care jobs, according to the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. For those reasons, achieving target 5.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to "recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and

social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate", is critical for accelerating progress.

52. Care work for the family and the community is not only essential to human life but also to the social and economic foundation of all economies. It enables the "productive" economy to function because it supports the well-being of the workforce, children, older persons and people with disabilities.[27] Unpaid care and domestic work thus subsidizes the monetized economy; at a conservative estimate, women's unpaid work contributes $10 trillion per year globally, or 13 per cent of global GDP, according to the High-level Panel. But that work remains unaccounted for, including in national income accounts and labour force surveys. Its value and its contribution to the productive economy are largely unrecognized. Because it is rendered invisible, women's and girls' essential contribution to economic life in the form of unpaid care and domestic work are grossly undervalued.

53. According to the High-level Panel, women undertake three times more unpaid work than men and spend about half as much time on paid work. This double responsibility of paid and unpaid work contributes to greater time burdens on women and substantially limits their participation in the social, political and economic spheres. When care services are not available or accessible, women can be pushed into the most vulnerable forms of employment to reconcile care needs with the imperative to earn. Poor women face special challenges in accessing care services, especially in low-income countries.

54. Recognizing and resolving care deficits in a given country will require social investments in affordable, good-quality and accessible care services (childcare, disability care and elder care), including for the most marginalized groups.[11] This can create a virtuous cycle of redistribution and reduction of unpaid care and domestic work, as can investments in basic physical infrastructure (water, electricity and safe transport), as well as the more equitable sharing of such work by women and men in the household. Legal reforms and labour market policies can facilitate the reconciliation of unpaid care and domestic work with paid employment to reduce gender discrimination in the labour market.

## A. Recognition of unpaid care and domestic work

55. Recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work can be facilitated by conducting time-use surveys, which have become one of the most commonly used methods for collecting data on unpaid work. Time-use surveys are used to report data on how, on average, people spend their time. The objective is to identify, classify and quantify the main types of activity that people are engaged in during a given time period. Time-use survey data can also be used for the valuation of unpaid care and domestic work and, in turn, to estimate its contribution to national income through satellite accounts. Further, time-use survey data can be used to demonstrate the links between unpaid work and poverty, in an expanded definition that goes beyond income poverty to time poverty.

56. The recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work can also benefit from strong national legislation. Many countries, for instance, have introduced legislation on paid parental leave policies. Others have introduced labour legislation that requires workplaces to provide childcare services for workers

[27] UN-Women, "Redistributing unpaid care and sustaining quality care services: a prerequisite for gender equality", Policy Brief, No. 5 (New York, 2016).

with small children or social security provisions that entitle people with disabilities from poor households to institutional care services.

## B. Reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work, including through sustained investments in the care economy

57. The reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work will require investments from both the public and private sectors. Such investments can have significant benefits, including increasing women's labour force participation and creating paid jobs in the care economy. Investments in key infrastructure — clean water, sanitation, energy and safe roads and transport — can alleviate time poverty and increase the productivity of women who work from home. They also make a significant contribution to reducing the time that women and girls spend performing unpaid care and domestic work, according to the High-level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment.

58. Investing in decent and affordable care services for all families remains the most efficient and direct way to redistribute care responsibilities from households to the State or the community and to encourage more women to participate in employment and other economic or social activities. A social care service infrastructure is therefore required, as it has the potential for triggering an effective transformation of the care economy, while at the same time creating decent jobs and alleviating poverty.[28]

59. Legal reforms and labour market policies can facilitate the reconciliation of unpaid care and domestic work with paid employment to eliminate gender discrimination in the labour market. Legislative reforms for the reconciliation of unpaid care and domestic work with paid employment include parental leave and other forms of care leave. Many countries have introduced parental leave and other care leave legislation to grant people time to spend away from work to care for children and/or for long-term ill and care-dependent family members.[27] Flexible workplace practices for a work-life balance that allows employees to work shorter working hours or negotiate flexible arrangements, such as working part-time, can also support the reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work.

60. Other policies that support the reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work include care insurance schemes that serve as an important mechanism for financing care work that may not be covered by legislation or social security insurance, such as elder care.[29] In some countries, public subsidies to care providers or income allowances for childcare and elder care services have proven to be relatively successful.[30] Labour market reforms to eliminate gender discrimination in recruitment and pay and remove horizontal and vertical occupational segregation can also enable the equalization of labour market incentives for women and men in allocating their time between unpaid work and employment.

61. Changing social norms that continue to see caregiving and domestic work as "women's work" is critical in shaping people's perceptions of who is responsible for

[28] Ipek Ilkkaracan, Kijong Kim and Tolga Kaya, *The Impact of Public Investment in Social Care Services on Employment, Gender Equality, and Poverty: The Turkish Case* (Istanbul, Istanbul Technical University Women's Studies Centre in Science, Engineering and Technology and the Levy Economics Institute, 2015).

[29] World Economic Forum, "Realizing human potential in the fourth industrial revolution: an agenda for leaders to shape the future of education, gender and work", white paper (Cologny, Switzerland, 2017).

[30] Jayoung Yoon, "Counting care work in social policy: valuing unpaid child- and eldercare in Korea", *Feminist Economics*, vol. 20 No. 2 (2014).

meeting care needs, who needs care and how that care should be delivered. Redistributing unpaid care and domestic work within households and engaging fathers and men in providing care can facilitate the redistribution of responsibilities at home. Supportive policies such as paternity leave and benefits, especially if non-transferable, help to distribute unpaid childcare more evenly between parents while combating gender stereotyping.[31]

## VI. Measures taken by Member States and support provided by United Nations entities to promote the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work

62. Member States have adopted a range of policies and programmes to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work. In Colombia, the care economy is included in the national accounting system to measure the contribution that women make to the economic and social development of the country. The country has implemented a national time-use survey and developed a satellite account. Costa Rica passed legislation in 2015 aimed at accounting for the contribution of unpaid domestic work and conducted a time-use survey in 2016 to make this work more visible. It is now developing a methodology for the economic valuation of unpaid care and domestic work activities. In El Salvador, the government conducted a time-use survey and is in the process of establishing a satellite account to recognize unpaid care and domestic work. Finland has been conducting time-use surveys since 1979, providing extensive and comparable time series data on unpaid care and domestic work.

63. In Finland, municipalities oversee care for an older, disabled or ill person in a home setting by a family member or a person with a close relationship to the person requiring care. The municipalities have informal care criteria and practices, which include a minimum monthly allowance and statutory leave days. Caregiver fees are taxable and contribute to pensions. New parents are entitled to 158 working days of leave, paid as a parental allowance. The allowances are usually calculated on the basis of income earned for the previous year, as confirmed for tax purposes. If the parent does not earn an income, he or she will receive the allowance at the minimum rate.

64. In Cambodia, the current national strategic plan on gender equality and women's empowerment includes programmes to increase access to day care and community kindergarten facilities. In Romania, the national employment strategy is aimed at stimulating women's participation in the labour market by developing infrastructure to increase access to childcare facilities and support services for the care of dependent family members. Australia grants family and parenting payments that provide help to low-income single- and two-parent families, as well as to people with sole or primary responsibility for the care of a young child. In Turkey, provisions have been introduced that permit working from home or outside the office. Parents can ask to work part-time until their child reaches compulsory school age. Belgium has introduced legislation to make working time more flexible and to regulate the practice of teleworking.

65. In Italy, parental leave has been modified to allow five months of maternity leave for mothers, and monthly vouchers are provided to low-income families to help pay for childcare. To reconcile work and family, the State budget law for 2015

[31] Willem Adema, Chris Clark and Olivier Thévenon, "Background brief on fathers' leave and its use" (OECD, 2016).

allocated resources to provide a monthly allowance of 800 euros per child born to or adopted by families whose annual income is less than 25,000 euros. Moreover, workers in the private or public sector who take care of a severely disabled cohabiting spouse who is not hospitalized may take a continuous or split period of up to two years off from work. If there is no cohabiting spouse, then the right belongs to the parents of the disabled person. The benefit granted during the leave period is the same as the most recent salary earned, up to a maximum of 43,579 euros per year.

66. In Zambia, female employees are entitled to 14 weeks of maternity leave and fathers up to 10 days of paternity leave, with full pay and benefits for each. In Kenya, the Employment Act of 2007 makes provisions for three months of fully paid maternity leave and paternity leave of two weeks. Slovenia supports activities to facilitate a more equal sharing of parental leave and to promote active fathering, including measures that promote part-time work. El Salvador is currently developing a social co-responsibility policy for caregiving to identify and promote public policies to redistribute unpaid care and domestic work between women and men within the family.

67. United Nations system entities have also supported initiatives that recognize, reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care and domestic work. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations focuses its interventions on reducing the time and effort that rural women and girls spend on collecting and using biomass for fuel. It has also introduced labour-saving agricultural technologies and practices to reduce the workload of women farmers.

68. The World Health Organization has focused on advocating changes to transnational policies that recognize female migrant care workers in both country of origin and country of destination. Such efforts include addressing their legal status, labour rights and health coverage.

## VII. Conclusions and recommendations

69. **Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are central to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its promise to leave no one behind. Even while there has been progress on many aspects of women's empowerment, those changes have not resulted in equal outcomes for women and men. Everywhere, women continue to be denied equal pay for work of equal value and are less likely than men to receive a pension. That translates into large income inequalities throughout their lives. Women perform a significant proportion of unpaid care and domestic work, which constrains them from taking decent jobs on an equal footing with men.**

70. **Action is needed on many fronts, including facilitating the transition of women working in informal employment to formal employment by creating decent work opportunities. Expanding social protection coverage will be critical to enhancing women's income security. Action will be needed to recognize the contribution of women's paid and unpaid work to economic growth and to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work. Action will also be needed to promote women's access to and control over assets, including land, property and financial services. There remains a pressing need to overcome legal barriers and discriminatory legislation that impede gender equality and women's empowerment. This will require a focus on the most marginalized women and those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of class and**

**work status. It will also require ensuring that their voices are heard and their perspectives respected and acted upon within decision-making processes.**

71. **Achieving the 2030 Agenda requires mainstreaming gender in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. Without gender equality and women's empowerment, the overarching vision of a world free of poverty in all its forms, everywhere, cannot be realized.**

72. **In order to scale up efforts to accelerate the transition of women from informal employment to formal employment, including access to decent work and social protection, and effectively support the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work by women, including through sustained investments in the care economy, Member States are encouraged to consider the following policy measures and actions:**

(a) **Promote gender-responsive macroeconomic policies that support the creation of full and productive employment opportunities and decent work for women by increasing investments in sectors of the economy and thereby increase the demand for their labour;**

(b) **Adopt policies to expand fiscal space and generate sufficient resources to invest in gender equality and women's empowerment by increasing public investments in physical and social care infrastructure, including water and sanitation infrastructure and renewable energy sources, as well as time- and energy-saving infrastructure and technology;**

(c) **Expand or reprioritize public expenditures to provide gender-responsive social protection for women and men throughout the life cycle;**

(d) **Promote policies that strengthen the financial inclusion of women by increasing access to credit for women-owned or women-operated enterprises;**

(e) **Ensure that national laws contain provisions for core labour standards, including minimum wages and secure labour contracts, worker benefits and labour rights for workers in informal employment, and end workplace discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnic background, migration status or disability;**

(f) **Adopt laws and regulatory frameworks to reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work for women through measures such as care leave policies, care insurance schemes, flexible workplace practices for work-life balance, decent work hours and cash transfers or child support grants paid to the primary caregiver;**

(g) **Adopt measures that recognize the contribution of unpaid care and domestic work to the national economy through the implementation of time-use surveys and the adoption of satellite accounts;**

(h) **Protect the rights to collective bargaining and freedom of association so as to enable women workers, especially informal workers, to organize and to join unions and workers' cooperatives;**

(i) **Take measures to increase women's access to productive resources and assets, including digital technology, land, property and financial services, including microfinance.**

73. **United Nations system entities and other international organizations are encouraged to support Member States through the provision of:**

(a) **Technical support, policy advice and capacity development in the areas of gender-responsive economic and social policy that promotes full employment and decent work for women;**

(b) **Technical and policy support to formulate and implement legal and regulatory frameworks that recognize the rights of women workers, in all forms of informal employment, to labour legislation, safe working conditions, a minimum wage and other protective measures in the workplace;**

(c) **Technical support to design gender-responsive social protection policies for women and men, throughout the life cycle, focusing in particular on workers in the informal economy, including through the sharing of lessons learned and best practices;**

(d) **Technical support and capacity-strengthening of national statistical offices and regional statistical commissions for measuring unpaid care and domestic work through regular time-use surveys and establishing satellite accounts to assess the contribution of such work to national income;**

(e) **Technical support and capacity-strengthening of national statistical offices so as to facilitate the collection, tabulation, dissemination and use of data on informal employment, disaggregated by sex, income, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location.**

United Nations A/72/283

General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 August 2017

Original: English

**Seventy-second session**
Item 24 (a) of the provisional agenda*
**Eradication of poverty and other development issues**

# Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/241. It provides a discussion of progress in and challenges to poverty eradication and an evaluation of the implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017). It concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Assembly to maintain the momentum generated by the implementation of the Decade in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

* A/72/150.

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# I. Introduction

1. The international community continued to make progress in eradicating poverty during the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017). Globally, Millennium Development Goal 1.A — halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1.25 a day — was attained five years ahead of schedule, in 2010. Significant progress was also made in reducing the prevalence of undernourishment, maternal and child mortality rates and the prevalence of malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Enrolment rates for primary school-aged children increased in many countries, as did access to safe water and sanitation. The Decade also saw progress in closing the gender gap in education and health. However, the pace of job creation remains inadequate for a growing labour force, despite signs of an improving world economy.

2. The Second Decade focused political attention on poverty eradication, which is a key challenge to development, and ensured that the issue remained at the core of social, economic and environmental policies. It also served as a platform for the mobilization of resources, the establishment of stronger partnerships for development and the enhancement of United Nations system-wide coherence for poverty eradication.

# II. Progress in eradicating poverty, creating employment and reducing inequality[1]

## A. Global progress in eradicating poverty and hunger

3. Remarkable progress made since 1990 has lifted 1 billion people out of extreme poverty, 440 million of whom between 2008 and 2013. In 2008, the year marking the beginning of the Second Decade, 17.8 per cent of the world's population lived on less than $1.90 a day (2011 purchasing power parity). By 2013, the most recent year for which official estimates exist, 10.7 per cent of the world's population was extremely poor. In absolute terms, the number of people living in poverty declined from approximately 1.2 billion in 2008 to 766.01 million in 2013.[2] The World Bank estimates that 9.1 per cent of the world's population was poor in 2016.[3] Such swift progress is unprecedented in history.

4. Progress has been uneven across and within regions, however. Levels of poverty fell sharply in Asia, from 20.5 per cent in 2008 to 8.6 per cent in 2013. Striking reductions in extreme poverty in East Asia and the Pacific, especially in China, account for most of this decline. In fact, the largest gains in poverty reduction were achieved in rural China, with more than 700 million rural poor people being lifted out of poverty since the enactment of the reform and open-door policy in the late 1970s. With more than half of the global population living in those areas, progress in East Asia and the Pacific has been critical to global efforts to

[1] Unless otherwise stated, information pertaining to indicators in the present report is taken from the statistical annex to the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2016/75). See http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/.

[2] World Bank, World Development Indicators database. Available from http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators.

[3] Christoph Lakner, Mario Negre and Espen Beer Prydz, "Twinning the goals: how can promoting shared prosperity help to reduce global poverty?", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 7106 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2014). Available from http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/816921468339602084/Twinning-the-goals-how-can-promoting-shared-prosperity-help-to-reduce-global-poverty.

eradicate poverty. The poverty rate in that region declined from 14.9 per cent in 2008 to 3.5 per cent in 2013. In absolute terms, the number of people living in poverty fell from 288.19 million to 71.02 million between 2008 and 2013. The period 2011-2013 saw the number of extreme poor decline by 95.9 million people compared with a decline of 70 million people during the period 2008-2010, suggesting an accelerated pace of progress in the recent past. The region's global share of the extreme poor fell sharply, from 23.9 per cent in 2008 to 9.3 per cent in 2013.

5. In comparison, the poverty rate in South Asia fell from 29.4 per cent in 2008 to 15.1 per cent in 2013, with most of the gains being accounted for by progress in India. Nevertheless, South Asia has the second largest concentration of people living in extreme poverty in the world, behind sub-Saharan Africa (256.2 million people living in poverty in 2013, compared with 388.7 million). In Latin America and the Caribbean, levels of poverty fell from 7.1 per cent in 2008 to 5.4 per cent in 2013. The reduction in income inequality in most countries of the region since the early 2000s and the expansion of social protection schemes and measures contributed to this decline. In the Middle East and North Africa, extreme poverty was very low (below 2 per cent) and declined up to 2013. Poverty levels have since increased slightly, however, owing to conflict. In Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), levels of poverty were high, declining from 38.2 per cent in 2008 to 27.2 per cent in 2013.

6. In Europe, extreme poverty was also quite low, with a poverty rate of 0.11 per cent in 2008 and 0.14 per cent in 2013. Nevertheless, relative poverty (incomes below 60 per cent of the median) remains a major concern. In the European Union, relative poverty, social exclusion, severe material deprivation and the number of households with low work intensity have increased in several countries since 2008. The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the States members of the European Union (excluding Croatia) increased from 116 million in 2008 to 120 million in 2012-2014, then fell to 118 million in 2015. The number of income-poor (people at risk of poverty) increased to 86 million in 2015, from 81 million in 2008.[4] Disparities in these conditions also increased between and within countries.

7. Levels of relative poverty decreased in other developed countries. In Australia, the headline poverty rate (after housing costs) stood at 13.3 per cent in 2013/14, down from 14.4 per cent in 2007/08. In the United States of America, the official poverty rate declined to 13.5 per cent in 2015 from 15.1 per cent in 2010. Globally, levels of poverty among children are also high, with 1 in 5 children in rich countries living in relative income poverty and 1 in 8 facing food insecurity.[5] In Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, levels of poverty are low when using the measure of $1.90 a day, but rise to 46.7 per cent in Tajikistan and 38.0 per cent in Kyrgyzstan when using national poverty lines.[6]

8. Progress has also been made on other dimensions of poverty. In the period 2014-2016, about 793 million people were undernourished globally compared with 878.2 million in the period 2008-2010. The proportion of undernourished people

[4] Anthony B. Atkinson, Anne-Catherine Guio and Eric Marlier, eds. *Monitoring Social Inclusion in Europe*, 2017 ed. (Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2017).

[5] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Office of Research — Innocenti, *Building the Future: Children and the Sustainable Development Goals in Rich Countries* (Florence, Italy, 2017). Available from www.unicef-irc.org/publications/890/.

[6] Eurostat, "Statistics explained". Available from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Main_Page (accessed 1 June 2017).

declined to 10.8 per cent in 2014-2016, from 12.9 per cent in 2008-2010.[7] The majority of undernourished people live in developing countries, with 2 in 3 living in Asia. Progress in reducing hunger has been rapid in Latin America and Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, but slow in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. In Africa, climatic shocks, drought conditions and ongoing conflict in north-east Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen have contributed to an increase in the number of people experiencing crisis-level food insecurity or worse, from 80 million in 2015 to 108 million in 2016.[8]

9. Globally, the number of children under 5 years of age suffering from stunting stood at 155 million in 2016 compared with 198.4 million in 2000, while wasting affected an estimated 52 million children. Africa and Asia bear the greatest burden of all forms of malnutrition. For example, in 2016, 56 per cent of all stunted children under 5 years of age lived in Asia and 38 per cent in Africa. Similarly, more than two thirds of all wasted children under 5 years of age lived in Asia and more than a quarter in Africa.[9]

10. Furthermore, about 1.1 billion people still live without electricity, water scarcity affects more than 2 billion people and close to 1 billion people in poor countries lack access to an all-weather road. The number of people living in slum conditions increased to 880 million in 2014, from 792 million in 2000.

## B. Progress in eradicating poverty in Africa and the least developed countries

11. The proportion of people in Africa living on less than $1.90 a day fell from 44.8 per cent in 2008 to 39.2 per cent in 2013. In sub-Saharan Africa, progress has been much slower, with the poverty headcount ratio falling to 40.9 per cent in 2013 from 47.0 per cent in 2008. With the world's fastest-growing population, further progress in reducing extreme poverty is a bigger challenge in sub-Saharan Africa.

12. In the least developed countries, extreme poverty fell from 43.6 per cent in 2008 to 36.3 per cent in 2013. Levels of extreme poverty continue to be very high in African least developed countries. In 2013, rates exceeded 70 per cent in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Malawi and South Sudan. However, the least developed countries have made important gains in other areas. Access to clean water increased to 68 per cent in 2014, from 60 per cent in 2005. Levels of child mortality have decreased and gender parity in primary education has improved. The under-5 mortality rate declined from 90.1 per 1,000 live births in 2010 to 72.8 per 1,000 live births in 2015. In 2014, the adjusted net enrolment rate for primary education was 40.4 per cent for girls and 39.9 per cent for boys. In 2010, the adjusted enrolment rates were 33.8 and 33.5 per cent for girls and boys, respectively.

13. Despite strong economic performance by Africa as a whole over the past two decades, that growth has not been translated into significant reductions in poverty and has failed to create enough good jobs. The continent's rapid growth is primarily resource driven and has not occurred in sectors in which large numbers of the working poor are found. Commodity-led growth is less inclusive, creates fewer jobs

[7] Figure for 2008-2010 from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development and World Food Programme, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2013: The Multiple Dimensions of Food Security* (Rome, 2013).

[8] Food Security Information Network, "Global report on food crises 2017" (Rome, 2017).

[9] UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank, "Joint child malnutrition estimates", 2017 ed. Available from https://data.unicef.org/resources/joint-child-malnutrition-estimates-2017-edition/.

and contributes to rising inequality in some countries. Progress has also been much slower because of the depth and severity of poverty. People living in extreme poverty in Africa start the furthest behind the international poverty line of $1.90 a day. In 2011, 22 per cent of Africans lived on between $0.70 and $1.25 a day, while 25 per cent lived on less than $0.70. For the rest of the developing world, the average income of a person living in extreme poverty in 2011 was $0.98 per day.[10] Therefore, although average incomes have been rising, growth has not been swiftly or inclusive enough to push large numbers of people over the $1.90 a day threshold.

14. The least developed countries are also experiencing the slowest pace of economic expansion since 2000. While average growth improved to 4.7 per cent in 2017 and is forecast to reach 5.3 per cent in 2018, it is well below the Sustainable Development Goal target of at least 7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) per annum in the least developed countries. Under the current growth trajectory and assuming no changes in income inequality, an estimated 35 per cent of the population in least developed countries, heavily indebted poor countries and countries in conflict and post-conflict situations may remain trapped in extreme poverty in 2030.[11]

## C. Promoting productive employment and decent work

15. While the centrality of employment and decent jobs to the eradication of poverty is well recognized, employment growth has not been sufficient to absorb the growing labour force, especially in those countries and regions with large youth populations. Moreover, there has been a divergence between productivity and wage growth, together with growing employment insecurity in both developed and developing countries. These trends are pushing people, especially young people and vulnerable and marginalized groups, into non-standard and precarious jobs. The extended weakness of the global economy has also been marked by pervasive decent work deficits, unequal labour market opportunities for women and young people and growing discontent with the prevailing social and economic situation.

16. In 2017, an estimated 5.7 per cent of workers around the world were not employed but looking for a job, down from 6.2 per cent at the peak of the global financial crisis in 2009 and from 6.0 per cent in 2008 at the beginning of the Second Decade. Globally, unemployment is expected to affect 201 million people in 2017, representing an additional 24 million unemployed compared with 2008. Global unemployment is also set to rise by 2.7 million in 2018, bringing total unemployment to 203.8 million. About 1.4 billion of those employed in 2017 are in vulnerable forms of employment. The number of workers in vulnerable forms of employment is projected to grow by 11 million per year. Over 70 per cent of these workers live in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.[12]

17. In addition to pervasive decent work deficits, emerging and developing countries continue to experience high levels of working poverty (income below $3.10 per day). While both the rate and the number of working poor are expected to continue a long-term decline, progress is stalling. The rate of extreme and moderate

[10] Laurence Chandy, Veronika Penciakova and Natasha Ledlie, "Africa's challenge to end extreme poverty by 2030: too slow or too far behind?", 29 May 2013. Available from www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2013/05/29/africas-challenge-to-end-extreme-poverty-by-2030-too-slow-or-too-far-behind/.

[11] *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2017* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.II.C.2). Update as at mid-2017.

[12] International Labour Organization, *World Employment Social Outlook: Trends 2017* (Geneva, 2017).

working poverty declined from 29.4 per cent in 2016 to 28.7 per cent in 2017. This represents a decline in the number of working poor from 783 million in 2016 to 776.2 million in 2017. This number is expected to decline further, to 769.4 million, in 2018. Nearly two thirds of workers in sub-Saharan Africa and half in Southern Asia are working poor.

18. Informality is a key contributor to working poverty. More than half of non-agricultural employment in most developing countries is informal, especially in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Informal employment is a greater source of employment for women than for men. More than 4 in 5 employed women workers in non-agricultural sectors in South Asia are informally employed, and about three quarters in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, half to two thirds of all informal workers outside of the agricultural sector are self-employed.

19. In contrast, levels of unemployment are expected to fall in developed countries, from 6.3 per cent in 2016 to 6.2 per cent in 2017. Unemployment rates have fallen in the United States and the European Union. In the States members of the European Union (excluding Croatia), 6.6 million jobs were created between 2013 and 2016 and unemployment is at its lowest since 2009. Levels of youth unemployment are also falling as a result of programmes such as the Youth Guarantee scheme, which has benefited 14 million young people since 2014.[13]

## D. Combating inequality

20. Accelerating poverty reduction and ending extreme poverty by 2030 also hinge on reducing inequality. Levels of poverty tend to fall at a faster pace in countries with initially lower levels of inequality. High levels of income inequality reduce the impact of growth on poverty, while decreasing inequality tends to contribute to poverty reduction at any given growth rate. Rising inequality is also associated with higher risks of social exclusion and political instability and with less than the highest possible standards in education and health care.

21. The Gini coefficient of global income inequality declined from 70.5 per cent in 2008[14] to 65 per cent in 2013.[15] Much of this decline is due to fast growth in populous developing countries. Nevertheless, the gap between rich and poor countries remains large. Furthermore, income inequality has been rising within most countries and inequalities persist in access to education, health care, productive assets and finance.

22. Trends in inequality within countries are mixed. In advanced economies, income inequality between the rich and the poor is at its highest level in decades, except for a decrease in some European countries between 2008 and 2012 following income losses suffered by those in the upper part of the income distribution during the global financial and economic crisis. In many European countries, the size of income redistribution measures has been critical in reducing income inequality. Pensions have a huge redistributive effect in Austria, France and Germany. In Central Europe, levels of income inequality remain considerably higher than in the

[13] See http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079.

[14] Christoph Lakner and Branko Milanovic, "Global income distribution: from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the great recession", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 6719 (Washington, D.C, World Bank, 2013). Available from http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/914431468162277879/pdf/WPS6719.pdf.

[15] Tomas Hellebrandt and Paolo Mauro, "The future of worldwide income distribution", Peterson Institute for International Economics Working Paper, No.15-7 (Washington, D.C., Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2015). Available from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2593894.

pre-transition period. Nonetheless, income inequality in these countries remains low by international standards. Inequality has also increased in the Russian Federation and in some other States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

23. In Africa, income inequality rose in some countries but fell in others. In Asia, inequalities have increased in several countries since the early 1990s, as growth has been less inclusive and less pro-poor. Inequalities have also risen sharply between rural and urban areas and among social groups. In the Middle East and North Africa, income inequality is relatively low compared with other regions and declined during the 2000s. There are, however, persistent gaps in the empowerment of women and young people in economic, political and social life. In Latin America and the Caribbean, most countries have succeeded in reducing income inequality since the early 2000s, although they started from levels that were some of the highest in the world. Recent progress in reducing both inequality and poverty is linked to high economic growth that saw the labour income of the lowest quintile increase at a faster pace than that of the top income quintile. The fall in inequality is also due to active social and labour market policies that boosted the participation of women in the labour market and narrowed the wage gap between skilled and low-skilled workers. These policies also reduced inequality in opportunities and tackled discrimination against ethnic/racial minorities and indigenous groups.

# III. Progress in implementing social policies for eradicating poverty

## A. Investment in education

24. The expansion of the education system and the improvement of its quality are important for growth, poverty eradication and reducing inequality. Gains resulting from industrialization and productivity increase much faster when coupled with significant progress on education beyond primary schooling. Evidence from developing countries covering the period 1965-2010 has shown that increasing the number of years of schooling among adults by two years could lift nearly 60 million people out of poverty, while achieving universal primary and secondary education would help to lift 420 million people out of poverty.[16] Education also has other social benefits, such as breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty and reducing inequality, fertility rates and maternal and child mortality rates. It also improves prospects for decent employment and higher lifetime earnings. Higher levels of female education also reduce other dimensions of poverty such as child morbidity and mortality.

25. Expansion of the education system that also includes investment in early childhood education and teachers and harnessing the power of information and communication technology is also critical. Investing in early education generates returns over a person's life, from increasing cognitive and achievement scores to higher earning potential in adulthood. A dollar spent on early childhood education earns between $6 and $17 in public benefits.[17] Nevertheless, only 38 countries provide free and compulsory pre-primary education for at least one year. In most

[16] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Reducing global poverty through universal primary and secondary education" (Paris, 2017). Available from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002503/250392e.pdf.

[17] World Bank, "Improving learning outcomes through early childhood development" (Washington, D.C., 2016). Available from http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/827581468189575720/pdf/98448-REVISED-PUBLIC-03-WB-Improving-Learning-ECD-041116-print.pdf.

cases, it is children from the richest families who mostly attend early childhood education, not those from poorest families.

26. Over the course of the Second Decade, countries have continued to consolidate the educational gains made since the launch of the Millennium Development Goals, but progress has stalled in recent years. The primary school net enrolment rate in the developing regions reached 91 per cent in 2015, up from 89 per cent in 2008.[18] Gross enrolment rates also increased globally at all levels of education. These gains notwithstanding, 264 million children, adolescents and young people were out of school in 2015, of whom, 61 million were of primary school age, 62 million lower secondary school age and 141 million upper secondary school age.[19] If current trends continue, approximately 15 million girls of primary school age will never have the opportunity to enrol in primary school compared with about 10 million boys, over 9 million of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa. There are still 758 million illiterate adults globally, the majority of whom are women.

27. Furthermore, public spending on education remains inadequate. In at least 35 countries, Governments spent less than 4 per cent of GDP and less than 15 per cent of their total expenditure on education.[20] Adequate funding, equitable resource allocation and the efficient use of resources for the education sector are vital to reduce the number of out-of-school children, enhance equality in education and address the lack of trained teachers.

## B. Investment in health care

28. Substantial progress has been made in the health sector during the past decade, including lowering the incidence of poverty-related diseases in poor countries. Health and life expectancy have improved almost everywhere, reducing the gap between countries and regions. The number of people dying from malaria and HIV has been halved, while the number of child deaths has declined to below 6 million — a 50 per cent reduction in annual deaths since 1990.[21] The progress made notwithstanding, challenges remain in reducing the burden of disease and financing the health sector in developing countries. Chronic non-communicable diseases have also emerged as a leading killer.

29. According to the World Health Organization, the average national percentage of total government expenditure on the health sector was 11.7 per cent in 2014. There was a slight increase in the level of public health expenditure and a slight decline in out-of-pocket expenditure both globally and in low-income countries between 1995 and 2014.

30. The world has made steady progress in reducing maternal mortality. The global maternal mortality ratio fell from 385 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 216 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015. Globally, however, more than 300,000 women died owing to pregnancy-related or childbirth-related complications in 2015. In that same year, the maternal mortality ratio in developing regions stood at 239

[18] *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.I.7) and *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.15.I.7).

[19] UNESCO, "Reducing global poverty" (see footnote 16).

[20] UNESCO, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2016: Education for People and Planet — Creating Sustainable Futures for All* (Paris, 2016). Available from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002457/245752e.pdf.

[21] WHO, *World Health Statistics 2017: Monitoring Health for the Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva, 2017). Available from http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/255336/1/9789241565486-eng.pdf?ua=1.

deaths per 100,000 live births compared with 12 deaths per 100,00 live births in developed regions.[22] Ending preventable maternal mortality requires investment in the health sector and the addressing of inequities in access to health services among population groups. In 2016, 78.5 per cent of births were attended by skilled birth attendants. The global under-5 mortality rate declined from 51.7 per 1,000 live births in 2010 to 43 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2015. Globally, there were 0.3 new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected people in 2015 compared with 0.33 new infections per 1,000 uninfected people in 2010. During this period, malaria incidence per 1,000 of the at-risk population fell from 118.7 to 94.0 and the incidence of tuberculosis declined from 155 to 142 per 100,000 people. Furthermore, the proportion of the population using an improved drinking-water source increased from 88.4 per cent in 2010 to 90.9 per cent (6.6 billion people) in 2015. The proportion of the population with access to improved sanitation services rose to 67.6 per cent in 2015 from 65.0 per cent in 2010.

31. Investments that increase access to high-impact health and nutrition interventions for the poorest and hardest-to-reach children and communities save almost twice as many lives as equivalent investments in non-poor groups.[23] Moreover, absolute reductions in under-5 mortality rates associated with improvements in intervention coverage were three times faster among poor groups than non-poor groups. Hence, the implementation of equity-enhancing policies and investments and the monitoring of gaps in coverage can reduce child morbidity and mortality and break intergenerational cycles of poverty, thereby helping countries to achieve the child morbidity- and mortality-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. Healthy children tend to have better schooling outcomes and are more likely to have higher labour market earnings as adults.

## C. Scaling up universal social protection

32. The past decade has seen an expansion of social protection coverage across the world. In 2015, as many as 1.9 billion people in 136 countries were beneficiaries of some form of social protection programme.[24] In Latin America, conditional cash transfer programmes cover 130 million people or 20.2 per cent of the region's population. In China, the rural minimum living standards guarantee programme (known as *dibao*) covers more than 50 million people, making it the largest social protection programme in the world. Nevertheless, according to International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates, in 2012 only 27 per cent of the working-age population and their families across the globe had access to comprehensive social security systems.[25]

33. The expansion of social protection coverage supports pro-poor growth. Policymakers do not necessarily face a trade-off when pitting the expansion of social protection coverage and the increase in benefits against growth objectives. Social protection measures promote pro-poor growth by preventing the loss of

[22] WHO, *Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2015 — Estimates by the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division* (Geneva, 2015). Available from http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/194254/1/9789241565141_eng.pdf?ua=1.

[23] United Nations Children's Fund, *Narrowing the Gaps: The Power of Investing in the Poorest Children* (New York, 2017). Available from www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_The_power_of_investing_in_the_poorest_children.pdf.

[24] World Bank, *The State of Social Safety Nets 2015* (Washington, D.C., 2015).

[25] International Labour Organization, *World Social Protection Report 2014/15: Building Economic Recovery, Inclusive Development and Social Justice* (Geneva, 2014). Available from www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_245201.pdf.

productive capital when people face economic hardship. They help poor people to accumulate productive assets, improve access to labour markets and increase investment in human capital, innovation and risk-taking. Social protection can also affect growth through multiplier effects on the local economy as a result of investments in public productive assets and infrastructure, increased household productivity, higher levels of employment and aggregate demand.

34. Higher levels of public social protection expenditure are also associated with lower levels of poverty and inequality. Cash transfers, free tuition and learning materials and school feeding programmes lead to higher school enrolment rates, fewer school dropouts and less child labour by removing demand-side barriers to education, including the need for poor families to rely on children for income and care work. Cash transfer programmes in Colombia, Malawi and Mexico have contributed to reducing stunting among children. In South Africa, children living in households receiving a pension grow on average 5 cm taller than those in households without a pension.

35. Social protection plays a major role in creating access to full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people. Cash transfers, active labour market programmes, health insurance and family-support policies increase labour market participation, especially among women. In South Africa, labour market participation among those receiving cash transfers was 13 to 17 per cent higher than in similar non-recipient households, with the greatest difference among women. The *Chile Joven* programme combines work experience, training and apprenticeships for young people who are unemployed or at high social risk. In India and Uganda, cash transfers have been used to provide employment for local young people and poor people. Public employment programmes have been linked to green jobs and environmental improvements in Brazil and the Philippines.[26]

## IV. Poverty eradication: lessons learned from the global food, energy financial and economic crises

36. The Second Decade coincided with the 2007-2008 shocks in food and energy prices and the onset of the global financial and economic crisis that led to the great recession. The Decade also witnessed major natural disasters and an escalation of conflicts that erased years of development progress in some regions. To adequately evaluate the implementation of the Second Decade, policy lessons from the responses to these crises and disasters will be important for maintaining the momentum generated by the implementation of the Decade towards poverty eradication and to ensure that markets work better for people living in poverty.

37. These crises depressed growth, had a negative impact on real incomes and household consumption and worsened poverty and basic human development outcomes, such as education and health. Global levels of unemployment and underemployment also soared. If past experience is any indication, crises of this magnitude tend to have longer-term impacts for poor people and people in vulnerable situations, in particular regarding the nutrition and cognitive development of children. Nutritional deprivation in early childhood is linked to stunting, poor schooling outcomes and reduced productivity in adulthood. The

[26] Anis Chowdhury, "Social protection for shared prosperity and inclusive growth", presentation to the expert group meeting on strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all, New York, 8 May 2017. Available from www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2017/04/Anis-Chowdhury-Social-Protection-for-shared-prosperity-and-inclusive-growth.pdf.

financial and food crises also forced poor and vulnerable households to alter their health-seeking behaviour and to reduce overall food intake or switch to less expensive and lower-quality foods. These changes increased the risk of undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.

38. One key policy lesson learned from these crises is the importance of social policy, including social protection floors, in guarding progress made on poverty eradication in all dimensions. Similarly, it is necessary to pursue forward-looking macroeconomic policies that promote inclusive, sustained and equitable economic growth, and the expansion of employment and decent work opportunities for all. During economic downturns, macroeconomic policies must be consistent with social policy in order to support demand and productive capacity, by maintaining public investment in education, health and social protection, and to boost employment, including through public investments in infrastructure.

39. Record staple food prices during the Second Decade severely constrained access to food for people living in poverty and vulnerable populations, thus aggravating food insecurity. Consequently, the food crises refocused emphasis on agriculture, especially in poor countries. Support to smallholder farmers and investment in agricultural research and development, irrigation, roads and markets were identified as critical interventions. The role of the State in supporting agriculture and the need for development partners to increase aid for agriculture also emerged as important lessons.

40. Evidence from the Second Decade has also shown that many of those who managed to escape extreme poverty continue to lack the capabilities, resources and opportunities to improve their lives and the prospects of their families. Various shocks could easily push people in vulnerable situations back into poverty. Policies to build resilience and support the empowerment of people living in poverty are recognized as essential for sustaining poverty reduction.

41. The crises also underscored the importance of increasing the coverage and benefit levels of social protection systems and measures, including floors, and protecting social investments and programmes that matter to people living in poverty, including women and children. Fiscal austerity measures that were adopted in some countries had a disproportionate impact on women, as the burden resulting from the reduction in public services was transferred to women and girls. In some cases, girls were forced to drop out of school to respond to increased household demand for unpaid care and domestic work. Furthermore, the crises also reinforced the concentration of women in vulnerable and informal employment.

42. It is also important to put in place measures to stimulate labour demand and accelerate employment recovery. The State should also be the employer of last resort. During the great recession, some countries launched employment guarantee schemes, which included labour-intensive public works programmes, keeping more employees in State-run enterprises than necessary and providing federal funding for employment in state and local governments.

43. The Second Decade also witnessed some of the most severe impacts of climate change and natural disasters on economic activities, infrastructure and human lives, highlighting the need to set aside resources for prevention, response, reconstruction and recovery and building resilience.

44. Developing countries emerged from the crisis with strong incentives to diversify their economies, enhance fiscal space by strengthening domestic resource mobilization efforts and keep fiscal deficits and public debt on a sustainable path. Countries have also sought to maximize the impact of macroeconomic, employment and social policies on poverty by ensuring better policy coordination and coherence

across sectors. Countries also took steps to strengthen data collection and analysis to inform evidence-based policymaking.

## V. Financing for development

45. The achievement of sustainable development and the eradication of poverty also hinge on the ability of countries to effectively mobilize domestic resources, attract foreign direct investment, fulfill official development assistance commitments and facilitate the transfer of technology. Debt relief and sustainability are critical for heavily indebted poor countries, while remittances have become a significant source of income and finance for receiving economies. Since 2000, all countries have experienced an increase in tax collection despite the decline that occurred following the global financial crisis in 2008. Median tax revenues in the least developed countries increased from under 10 per cent of GDP in 2001 to 14.8 per cent in 2015.[27] The strengthening of domestic resource mobilization should be augmented by tackling illicit activity, including the elimination of illicit financial flows.

46. Capital flows to developing countries remain well below the levels seen between 2010 and 2014. Flows rebounded early in 2017, however, with several large emerging economies recording strong increases in bond and equity inflows. Total foreign direct investment flows to developing economies fell by an estimated 20 per cent in 2016, as low commodity prices deterred investment in commodity-related sectors. Nevertheless, a modest recovery in such flows to developing countries is expected in 2017. Foreign direct investment flows to Africa, developing Asia and Latin America also continue to be heavily concentrated in a few large emerging economies. While the recovery in these capital flows augurs well for growth prospects, their impact on poverty reduction will depend on whether they are directed at sectors that create large numbers of decent jobs. If the resources are solely targeted at capital-intensive extractive sectors, their employment-creation and poverty-reducing effects will be minimal.

47. Total net official development assistance from members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development rose from $119.8 billion in 2008 to $142.6 billion in 2016, reaching a new peak. Net official development assistance also rose as a share of gross national income from 0.30 per cent in 2008 to 0.32 per cent in 2016. A rise in aid spent on refugees in donor countries boosted the total in 2016. Net official development assistance to the least developed countries fell from $41.1 billion in 2010 to $37.3 billion in 2016.[28,29]

## VI. National experiences with regard to the implementation of the Second Decade

48. In order to evaluate the implementation of the Second Decade and make recommendations to maintain the momentum generated by the implementation of

[27] *Financing for Development: Progress and Prospects — Report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development 2017* (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.17.I.5).

[28] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Development aid at its highest level ever in 2008". Available from www.oecd.org/dac/stats/developmentaidatitshighestlevelever in2008.htm.

[29] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Development aid rises again in 2016", 11 April 2017. Available from www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/ODA-2016-detailed-summary.pdf.

the Second Decade in accordance with paragraph 49 of General Assembly resolution 71/241, a survey was posted online and sent to all Member States. It contained questions on the legislation, policies and programmes for poverty eradication in each country. Fifty countries completed the survey. The present section contains the key findings.

49. One critical accomplishment at the national level is the commitment made by Member States to developing national strategies to eradicate extreme poverty in all its forms. Of the 50 countries that responded, 44 have developed national plans, strategies or frameworks, including 27 that also revised existing poverty eradication strategies. Thirty countries reported receiving support from the United Nations system in the development of their national poverty eradication plans. Twenty-seven countries received technical support, 15 capacity-building support and 14 financial support. Among the few countries that were not able to develop or revise their plans, four countries cited lack of political commitment, three lack of resources and two lack of institutional capacity. Two countries also indicated that poverty issues were given low priority.

50. Forty-three countries reported that, since 2008, their national poverty eradication frameworks included actions to support the follow-up to the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, related to the eradication of poverty and to coordinate international support to that end. In addition, since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 39 countries have national frameworks that support the follow-up to the implementation of this new agenda and the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals.

51. Thirty-seven countries reported having a national coordinating body on poverty eradication. The most common institutional set-up is a ministerial committee or unit (30 countries), followed by a national commission or council (16 countries). Nine countries also reported having institutional arrangements that included non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors.

52. Countries also reported on whether, to ensure that no one is left behind, their national poverty eradication frameworks specifically addressed the concerns of people in vulnerable situations, including women, children and young people, indigenous peoples, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons. National frameworks addressed the specific needs of older persons in 31 countries, persons with disabilities in 30 countries, children in 28 countries, migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons in 28 countries and young people in 27 countries. Twenty-four countries reported addressing the specific needs of indigenous groups. Thirty-three countries have also taken specific measures to alleviate poverty in rural, remote and mountainous areas.

53. Another accomplishment is the increased attention to employment. Twenty-five countries reported having adopted policies consistent with the Global Jobs Pact adopted by ILO. In that regard, 30 countries reported having integrated the decent work agenda into their national policies and programmes since 2008. Thirty-three countries have taken specific measures to promote full employment and decent work for disadvantaged groups. Twenty-six countries have specific measures for youth, 24 have measures for persons with disabilities and 17 have measures for other vulnerable or marginalized groups. For example, Slovakia has put in place specific measures to promote employment among older persons and marginalized Roma communities.

54. The Second Decade also placed emphasis on the importance of resource mobilization and partnerships for poverty eradication. Since 2008, 25 countries have put in place national strategies to mobilize resources from various sources. They

held domestic resource mobilization meetings with donors and the private sector and promoted relationships with new and potential donors. Sixteen countries established international partnerships with donor agencies, 15 with NGOs and 9 with civil society organizations. Twenty-three countries reported that, since 2008, they had adopted strategies and measures, including changes in legislation, to form partnerships with organizations dealing with poverty eradication and sustainable development issues. Of those, 15 countries had formed South-South partnerships, 9 had formed North-South partnerships and 7 had established triangular cooperation. Countries have also established partnerships at the national level, primarily with donor agencies, national NGOs and the private sector. Thirteen countries reported having established partnerships with women's groups, 12 with youth groups, 12 with community leaders and 9 with the media.

55. Greater attention was given to national contexts during the Second Decade. Twenty countries reported having reviewed their national policies since 2008 to adapt international, continental and regional policies, strategies and frameworks to their national circumstances. Eighteen countries formulated plans and programmes and 17 formulated new or reviewed existing legislation to that effect. Other countries also improved service delivery, undertook advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns, built consensus and partnerships and reformed public institutions. Member States have also used different poverty measures to track progress at the national level. Thirty countries used national monetary poverty lines and 19 international monetary poverty lines. Twenty-two countries also reported using multidimensional measures and 17 non-monetary measures, such as calorie consumption.

56. Monitoring and evaluation of poverty eradication strategies and programmes at the national level were also strengthened. Thirty countries assigned responsibilities to their national institutions to support the follow-up to the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. Twenty-two countries put in place ministerial committees, 14 have national commissions, 5 worked with NGOs or donors and 6 partnered with community and religious organizations. Three countries established parliamentary committees. Thirty countries developed mechanisms to monitor and measure progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. Nineteen countries established multisectoral coordinating bodies, 13 conducted annual national surveys on the status of implementation and 12 appointed focal points or desk officers to oversee the implementation process. The Government of Germany, for example, has been reporting every four years on the implementation status of its national sustainable development strategy that was developed in 2002. The strategy includes national sustainability goals and indicators that allow for the regular measurement of progress and help to identify any wrong turns in policy. Furthermore, the Federal Statistical Office publishes an independent indicator report with information about progress towards meeting the goals every two years.

57. To better track progress and ensure that no one is left behind, most countries reported having collected disaggregated data on poverty by income, sex, age and geographical location. Nevertheless, few countries reported having collected data by race or ethnicity, migration status and/or disability status. To strengthen their national statistical capacity and monitoring systems, 25 countries strengthened the capacity of their national institutions for data collection, processing, analysis and utilization, 20 created or strengthened their national statistical services, 19 trained staff on database management and 18 supported the development of national databases and management information systems. Seventeen countries also reported having mobilized donor support to strengthen national statistical capacity.

58. Despite progress in several areas, countries identified challenges affecting the implementation of poverty eradication strategies and programmes. These include the need for greater budgetary resources and capacity for policy development, increased human resources dedicated to poverty eradication issues and greater support from international agencies, including the United Nations, together with strengthened interministerial or interdepartmental coordination.

59. Efforts to eradicate extreme poverty stand a greater chance of success when countries take measures to promote the active participation of those living in extreme poverty in the design and implementation of programmes and policies that address multidimensional poverty. Twenty countries reported having involved people living in poverty in the design and implementation of such programmes and policies. For example, the "Progressing with solidarity" programme of the Dominican Republic involves people living in extreme poverty in the diagnosis of needs and priorities, and the design of social protection strategies. In France, the National Council for Policies to Reduce Poverty and Social Exclusion includes persons facing social exclusion to ensure that their views are considered in evaluating poverty eradication mechanisms. As part of national implementation of the European platform against poverty and social exclusion, Austria has established a national platform to combat poverty and social exclusion that guarantees a permanent dialogue with all relevant stakeholders.

## VII. United Nations system support for the Second Decade

60. The United Nations system continues to support the implementation of the objectives of the Second Decade through activities under the inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication. ILO promoted adherence to core labour standards and supports more than 50 countries in the design of national public employment programmes and labour-based schemes to rehabilitate and improve physical and environmental infrastructure and services. It is also contributing to policies and strategies that are influencing labour-intensive schemes and creating better synergies between the humanitarian-development nexus. ILO, together with other development partners, has been involved in the development of various inter-agency social protection assessment tools, including a public works assessment tool.

61. Since 2014, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women have been implementing a joint programme to accelerating progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women, which addresses key structural barriers to gender equality and the economic empowerment of women. The programme focuses on improving food security and nutrition for rural women, together with their incomes, leadership roles and participation in both rural institutions and the shaping of laws, policies and programmes.

62. FAO continues to actively promote decent rural employment and income diversification. The FAO Social Protection Framework seeks to maximize the impact of social protection on hunger, rural poverty and resilience by building and strengthening social protection systems that are integrated into broader livelihood promotion and rural development strategies. FAO has partnered with the United Nations Children's Fund in countries in sub-Saharan Africa to demonstrate the impact that cash transfer programmes can have on ending poverty. FAO supports country efforts to create decent farm and off-farm employment and improve policy coherence between social protection and food security and nutrition, agriculture and

rural development, and ensure effective operational design of social protection schemes. It also seeks to scale up decent jobs for young people through the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development.

63. The aim of the strategic plan of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is to help countries to simultaneously achieve the eradication of poverty and a significant reduction in inequalities and exclusion. UNDP promotes greater awareness about the decent work agenda as an effective strategy for poverty eradication and shares good practices to promote employment and decent work at the national and international levels. It also supports the integration of decent work for poverty eradication into national and international policies and programmes and supports employment creation for young people through the United Nations system-wide Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. Through the United Nations mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support strategy, UNDP supports countries in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2015, UNDP support enabled 53 countries to adopt, expand or implement social protection systems. By the end of 2017, UNDP expects to have helped 48 countries to strengthen the capacity of civil society to engage meaningfully in pro-poor policy debates and action.

64. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) continues to promote the achievement of inclusive and sustainable industrial development. The Programme for Country Partnership accelerates and customizes the technical assistance provided by UNIDO to countries by rapidly scaling up national industrial agendas. UNIDO is also engaged in creating youth employment opportunities by supporting the creation and expansion of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in over 15 countries. Since 2010, UNIDO has also been working on fostering market access of agrifood and handicraft value chains in developing countries through the Origin consortia project.

65. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) has been working with other partners to address cross-cutting policy issues with an impact on poverty. Advocacy work has been an important focus of these efforts and includes the preparation of a regional advocacy paper entitled "Building more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous societies in Europe and Central Asia". The Commission's activities under its Gender and Economy Programme have included focusing on creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship among women, including through the organization of subregional and regional forums for women entrepreneurs to address concerns such as the networking opportunities, access to credit and specific knowledge and skills. ECE is also engaged in the measurement of poverty, inequality and vulnerability. Its task force on poverty measurement has worked with Member States to exchange knowledge and best practices in poverty measurement, with the goal of developing guidelines and recommendations for improving the international comparability and availability of statistics on poverty.

66. Within the Secretariat, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is responsible for promoting and supporting international cooperation to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Department provides normative and policy support to the intergovernmental processes in social, economic and environmental areas. It conducts analyses of and research into key sustainable development challenges and policy options and provides technical support to Member States on issues such as policy coherence and statistical development. Its flagship publications underscore the critical role of full employment and decent work for all for poverty eradication, the fostering of social inclusion and efforts to combat inequality. These reports also call for better coordination of social and macroeconomic policies to promote long-term stabilization, which could support the goal of full employment. Its work on social groups, such as young people, persons

with disabilities, older persons and indigenous groups, ensures that no one will be left behind. Such analytical normative work, supplemented by capacity-building activities in support of developing countries, formed an integral part of the efforts of the United Nations system to implement the objectives of the Second Decade.

## VIII. Conclusion and recommendations

**67. The Second Decade contributed to progress in eradicating poverty at the national level while also serving as an effective platform for coordination of increased United Nations system support to countries for inclusive development. Continued political commitment to eradicating poverty in all its forms is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Considering the uneven progress made by countries and regions in implementing the objectives of the Second Decade and to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations:**

**(a) Developing countries should promote structural transformation that is driven by sustainable and inclusive industrialization to effectively reduce poverty and promote economic growth with employment creation. In promoting industrial growth, countries should support employment-intensive small and medium-sized enterprises and pursue specific policies to assist the working poor trapped in low-skill, low-productivity and low-wage jobs. Successful transformation also requires the prioritization of investment in farm and off-farm activities to improve food security and nutrition and to boost rural incomes. Rural cooperatives and institutions should be engaged to contribute to poverty eradication;**

**(b) Countries should address inequality as an integral part of poverty eradication strategies through public policy and market-based mechanisms that improve access to employment, infrastructure, education, health care and other essential services to enable sustained and inclusive development that increases income for all;**

**(c) To promote decent work for poverty eradication, countries should implement an integrated approach towards the formalization of informal economies by simultaneously facilitating the transition of workers and economic units from the informal to the formal economy and promoting the creation and preservation of enterprises and decent jobs in the formal economy through the promotion of coherent macroeconomic, employment, social protection and other social policies. In this regard, countries should explore effective ways to respond to the employment challenges faced by young people, women, persons with disabilities and older persons through multipronged approaches that address both the quality and quantity of employment opportunities;**

**(d) In order to develop human capital, countries need to tackle the lack of equal opportunities, improve the quality of education, build education infrastructure and invest in teachers. Education systems should provide young people with the right mix of knowledge and experience to prepare for active citizenship; similarly, countries should bolster investment in primary health care and large-scale interventions that include child vaccination and anti-malaria campaigns, and the provision of antiretroviral therapy, to reduce the burden of disease and health inequalities;**

**(e) Labour market policies should significantly improve the terms and conditions of women's participation in the labour market by facilitating the reconciliation of unpaid care work with employment and eliminate gender discrimination in the labour market;**

**(f) In order to escape poverty, developing countries require knowledge, adaptation measures and innovation suited to their national circumstances. The private sector and civil society organizations should support poverty eradication efforts by testing, developing and promoting the scaling-up of cost-effective and contextualized solutions;**

**(g) The United Nations system should continue to coordinate its support to developing countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty, the key challenge in the integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda.**

United Nations A/72/284

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 August 2017

Original: English

**Seventy-second session**
Item 73 (b) of the provisional agenda*
**Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms**

# Promotion of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

In its resolution 70/152, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly, at its seventy-second session, a comprehensive report on the promotion of equitable geographical distribution of the membership of the human rights treaty bodies. The present report, submitted in response to that request, provides information on the system for the election of treaty body members and an analysis of the membership of each treaty body, by geographical region, as at 1 January 2017.

* A/72/150.

17-13376 (E) 240817

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# I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 70/152, the General Assembly encouraged States parties to the United Nations human rights instruments to consider and to adopt concrete actions, inter alia, the possible establishment of quotas by geographical region for membership of the treaty bodies, thereby ensuring the paramount objective of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of those human rights bodies. The Assembly recommended, when considering the possible allocation of seats on each treaty body on a regional basis, the introduction of flexible procedures that would encompass the following criteria:

(a) Each of the five regional groups established by the Assembly is allocated seats on each treaty body in equivalent proportion to the number of States parties to the instrument in that group;

(b) There must be provision for periodic revisions of the allocation of seats in order to reflect the relative changes in the level of treaty ratification in each regional group;

(c) Automatic periodic revisions should be envisaged in order to avoid amending the text of the instrument when the quotas are revised.

2. The General Assembly stressed that the process needed to achieve the goal of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of human rights treaty bodies could contribute to raising awareness of the importance of gender balance, the representation of the principal legal systems and the principle that the members of the treaty bodies should be elected and should serve in their personal capacity, and should be of high moral character, acknowledged impartiality and recognized competence in the field of human rights.

3. The General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to submit to the Assembly, at its seventy-second session, a comprehensive updated report, including information on any steps taken by States parties to the United Nations human rights instruments, at their meetings or conferences, to address the matter of equitable geographical distribution in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies, as well as specific recommendations on the implementation of resolution 70/152.

4. The present report, submitted in response to that request, provides an analysis of the composition of the membership of the human rights treaty bodies as at 1 January 2017.[1]

# II. Human rights treaty bodies

5. Nine core international human rights treaties and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment provide for the creation of a committee of experts to carry out the functions delineated in the treaty and, where relevant, its optional protocols. Accordingly:

[1] Elections of members of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee against Torture have taken place since January 2017; the results of those elections are not reflected in the calculations presented herein.

(a) The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, established under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, began work in 1970;

(b) The Human Rights Committee, established under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, began work in 1977 and is invested with functions by the Covenant and its two Optional Protocols;

(c) The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, established under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, began work in 1982 and is invested with functions by the Convention and its Optional Protocol;

(d) The Committee against Torture, established under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, began work in 1987;

(e) The Committee on the Rights of the Child, which began work in 1991, oversees implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its three Optional Protocols;

(f) The Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, established under the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, began work in 2004;

(g) The Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, established under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, began work in 2007;

(h) The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, established under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, which began work in 2009, is invested with functions by the Convention and its Optional Protocol;

(i) The Committee on Enforced Disappearances, established under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, began work in 2011;

(j) The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights does not provide for the creation of a treaty body, but gives the Economic and Social Council a general mandate to oversee the implementation of the Covenant by States parties and the specialized agencies through the consideration of reports. In 1978, the Council created the Sessional Working Group of Governmental Experts on the implementation of the Covenant to assist it in considering the reports submitted by States parties (Council decision 1978/10), the composition of which was amended by the Council in 1985 (Council resolution 1985/17), and it was renamed the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Committee, which is treated as a treaty body, first met in 1987. Subsequently, the Human Rights Council has called for the regularization of the Committee so that its establishment is consistent with other treaty bodies (Human Rights Council resolution 4/7).

## III. Election of members of the human rights treaty bodies

6. With the exception of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, whose elections are governed under the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 1985/17, the elections of members of treaty bodies are governed by the provisions set out in each treaty (article 8, International Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; articles 28-34, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; article 17, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; article 17, Convention against Torture; article 43, Convention on the Rights of the Child; article 72, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; articles 5-9, Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture; article 34, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and article 26, International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance).

7. In accordance with those provisions, each committee is composed of independent experts, ranging in number from 10 to 25, with provisions for an expansion of the membership being included in several treaties (up to a maximum of 14 under article 72 (1)(b) of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; up to a maximum of 25 under article 5 (1) of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture; and up to a maximum of 18 under article 34 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

8. To nominate or elect a member of a treaty body, a State must be a party to the treaty concerned (with the exception of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, where the election process is conducted under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council). Experts are nominated and elected by States parties to the treaty concerned by secret ballot. They serve for four-year terms and, except in the case of the newer treaty bodies, mainly the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which allow for the renomination of members only once, the treaties do not limit the number of times a member's term may be renewed. With the exception of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, which allow for the nomination of two candidates by each State party, all treaties limit the number of nominees to one. Candidates must be nationals of the nominating State party, except in the case of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, which entitles States parties, in nominating two candidates, to nominate a candidate who is a national of another State party: before it nominates a national of another State party, the nominating State must obtain the consent of the other State party (article 6).

9. Where the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is concerned, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1985/17, provides that the Committee is to consist of 18 members elected by the Council by secret ballot from a list of persons nominated by States parties to the Covenant. With regard to the composition of the Committee, the resolution stipulates that due consideration must be given to equitable geographical distribution and to the representation of different forms of social and legal systems. Accordingly, 15 seats on the Committee are distributed on the basis of regional groups and 3 seats are allocated in accordance with the increase in the total number of States parties per regional group. Members serve for four-year terms and are eligible for re-election if nominated. The elections of members in respect of all other treaty bodies are held at biennial meetings of the States parties, or in the case of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, at a conference of States parties to the Convention. In all cases, to avoid a change of the entire membership, the terms of half of the members elected at the first election are limited to two years, following which elections occur every two years.

10. On 9 April 2014, the General Assembly adopted resolution 68/268 on strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system. In paragraph 13, the Assembly encouraged States parties, in the

election of treaty body experts, to give due consideration, as stipulated in the relevant human rights instruments, to equitable geographical distribution, the representation of the different forms of civilization and the principal legal systems, balanced gender representation and the participation of experts with disabilities in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies.

## A. Qualifications for nomination as members

11. The qualifications expected of nominees, set out in the human rights treaties and in Economic and Social Council resolution 1985/17, vary. In general, members are required to be of recognized competence and of high moral standing and acknowledged impartiality. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also indicates that consideration should be given to the usefulness of the participation of some persons having legal experience (article 28 (2)), while the Convention against Torture provides that, in nominating candidates, States parties should bear in mind the usefulness of nominating persons who are also members of the Human Rights Committee and who are willing to serve on the Committee against Torture (article 17 (2)). The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture indicates that members should have proven professional experience in the field of the administration of justice, in particular criminal law, prison or police administration, or in the various fields relevant to persons deprived of their liberty (article 5 (2)). In the case of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, States parties are invited to give due consideration to article 4 (3) when nominating candidates (article 34 (3)). This requires States parties to closely consult and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the Convention and other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities. All treaties and Council resolution 1985/17 indicate that members should serve in a personal capacity.

## B. Criteria for election of members

12. The treaties and Economic and Social Council resolution 1985/17 provide criteria for States in the election of members of treaty bodies. With regard to the question of geographical balance, while consideration must be given to equitable geographical distribution in all cases, there is no formal quota, except in the case of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, where Council resolution 1985/17 establishes a formula for ensuring balance. Additional considerations include representation of the principal legal systems (the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities); the different forms of social and legal systems (the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights); the different forms of civilization (the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities); the different forms of civilization and legal systems of the States parties (the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture); and legal experience (the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture).

13. The newer treaties contain explicit provisions relating to gender balance. Thus, in the composition of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, due consideration is to be given to balanced gender representation on the basis of the principles of

equality and non-discrimination (article 5 (4)). Where the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is concerned, States parties are also required to give consideration to balanced gender representation and the participation of experts with disabilities. The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance also requires due consideration to be given to balanced gender representation (article 26 (1)).

14. Allocation of membership on a regional basis applies only in the case of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, with Economic and Social Council resolution 1985/17 providing that 15 seats on the Committee will be distributed equally among the regional groups, while the additional 3 seats will be allocated in accordance with the increase in the total number of States parties per regional group.

### C. Replacement of members

15. All treaties contain provision for the replacement of any members who resign or die before the end of their term. In most cases, the State party that nominated the former member appoints another expert from among its nationals to fill the vacancy for the remainder of the term, subject in certain cases to the approval of the relevant treaty body: the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on Migrant Workers. In the case of the Committee against Torture, this is subject to the approval of other States parties. Although replacement in such cases has no impact on the existing geographical distribution of the committee concerned, article 34 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights requires that vacancies on the Human Rights Committee result in a new round of nominations and elections, provided that at least six months remain before the expiration of the term of the member. Although that may result in a change in the geographical composition of the Committee, in practice, the nationality of the member has changed only once on the occasions when members of the Committee have been replaced, with the replacement being from the same region as that of the original member.

## IV. Five regions

16. According to a list compiled on the basis of the practice of States in elections at the General Assembly (see annex), the current composition of the regions recognized by the Assembly is as follows:

Table 1
**Current composition of the regions recognized by the General Assembly**

| | |
|---|---|
| African States | 54 |
| Asia-Pacific States | 54 |
| Eastern European States | 23 |
| Latin American and Caribbean States | 33 |
| Western European and other States | 29 |
| **Total** | **193** |

17. The practice of some States differs for the purposes of elections and for other functions. For example, for the purpose of elections, Turkey votes with the Western

European and other States, although it is also a member of the Asia-Pacific States. The United States of America is not a member of any regional group, but attends meetings of the Western European and other States Group as an observer and is considered to be a member of that group for electoral purposes.

18. The Cook Islands, the Holy See, Niue and the State of Palestine are parties to one or more of the treaties, but are not States Members of the United Nations.

## V. Geographical distribution

19. Currently, 172 individual experts from 85 countries are serving as members of the treaty bodies. The membership of each treaty body varies, ranging from 10 to 25 (see table 2).

Table 2
**Membership of human rights treaty bodies**

| *Committee* | *Membership* |
|---|---|
| Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination | 18 |
| Human Rights Committee | 18 |
| Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights | 18 |
| Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women | 23 |
| Committee against Torture | 10 |
| Committee on the Rights of the Child | 18 |
| Committee on Migrant Workers | 14 |
| Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture | 25 |
| Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | 18 |
| Committee on Enforced Disappearances | 10 |
| **Total** | **172** |

### A. Current status of geographical distribution of membership of treaty bodies

20. With regard to the current status of the geographical distribution of the membership of the human rights treaty bodies, the Western European and other States and the African States, each of which has 44 members (26 per cent), are the largest, followed by the Asia-Pacific States, with 32 members (18 per cent); the Latin American and Caribbean States, with 28 members (16 per cent); and the Eastern European States, with 24 members (14 per cent) (see table 3).

21. Relative to the level of treaty ratification by States per region, the Asia-Pacific States and the African States are underrepresented, while the Western European and other States are overrepresented (see table 3).

Table 3
**Geographical distribution of membership of treaty bodies**

| *States* | *Number of members (percentage)* | | *Number of ratifications (percentage)* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| African | 44 | (26) | 407 | (29) |
| Asia-Pacific | 32 | (18) | 317 | (22) |
| Eastern European | 24 | (14) | 197 | (14) |
| Latin American and Caribbean | 28 | (16) | 250 | (18) |
| Western European and other | 44 | (26) | 228 | (16) |
| Non-member | | – | 14 | (1) |
| **Total** | **172** | **(100.0)** | **1 413** | **(100.0)** |

22. The geographical distribution of membership relative to the level of treaty ratification, when examined by committee, indicates the following (see table 4):

(a) Although the composition of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination shows a more balanced geographic distribution, the Eastern European States are underrepresented;

(b) In the case of the Human Rights Committee, the Asia-Pacific States remain far underrepresented, while the Western European and other States are strongly overrepresented;

(c) In the case of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the African States and the Asia-Pacific States are proportionately represented, while the Latin American and Caribbean States are slightly underrepresented compared with the Western European and other States relative to their proportion of ratifications;

(d) With regard to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, although the Western European and other States, the Asia-Pacific States and the African States have the same rate of representation, the Eastern European States and the Latin American and Caribbean States are underrepresented;

(e) Concerning the Committee against Torture, the Western European and other States are overrepresented, while the Eastern European States and the Latin American and Caribbean States are underrepresented;

(f) For the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the African States are far overrepresented and the Eastern European States and the Latin American and Caribbean States are underrepresented;

(g) In the case of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, the Asia-Pacific States and the African States are underrepresented and the Eastern European States overrepresented;

(h) For the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Latin American and Caribbean States are underrepresented relative to their proportion of ratifications and the Asia-Pacific States and the African States are overrepresented. At its seventeenth session, held from 20 March to 12 April 2017, the Committee adopted a statement in which it expressed concern about the shifting geographic balance on the Committee and called upon States parties to secure equal geographic representation in its membership;

(i) In the case of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the African States are not represented notwithstanding the high proportion of their ratification, while the Latin American and Caribbean States and the Western European and other States are overrepresented relative to their proportion of ratifications.

Table 4
**Ratifications and membership of each treaty body, by region, as at 1 January 2017**

| | *Membership* | *Ratification* |
|---|---|---|
| | *Number (percentage)* | |
| **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**[a] | | |
| Total: membership and ratifications | 18 | 178 |
| African | 5 (28) | 52 (29) |
| Asia-Pacific | 3 (17) | 39 (22) |
| Eastern European | 1 (6) | 23 (13) |
| Latin American and Caribbean | 4 (22) | 32 (18) |
| Western European and other | 5 (28) | 30 (17) |
| Non-member States | – | 2 (1) |
| **Human Rights Committee**[b] | | |
| Total: membership and ratifications | 18 | 168 |
| African | 5 (28) | 51 (30) |
| Asia-Pacific | 1 (6) | 36 (21) |
| Eastern European | 2 (11) | 22 (13) |
| Latin American and Caribbean | 2 (11) | 29 (17) |
| Western European and other | 8 (44) | 29 (17) |
| Non-member States | – | 1 (1) |
| **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**[c] | | |
| Total: membership and ratifications | 18 | 164 |
| African | 4 (22) | 49 (30) |
| Asia-Pacific | 4 (22) | 35 (21) |
| Eastern European | 3 (17) | 23 (14) |
| Latin American and Caribbean | 3 (17) | 29 (18) |
| Western European and other | 4 (22) | 27 (16) |
| Non-member States | – | 1 (1) |
| **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**[d] | | |
| Total: membership and ratifications | 23 | 189 |
| African | 6 (26) | 53 (28) |
| Asia-Pacific | 6 (26) | 51 (27) |
| Eastern European | 2 (9) | 22 (12) |
| Latin American and Caribbean | 3 (13) | 33 (17) |
| Western European and other | 6 (26) | 28 (15) |
| Non-member States | – | 2 (1) |
| **Committee against Torture**[e] | | |
| Total: membership and ratifications | 10 | 160 |
| African | 2 (20) | 47 (29) |
| Asia-Pacific | 2 (20) | 34 (21) |
| Eastern Europe | 1 (10) | 25 (16) |
| Latin American and Caribbean | 1 (10) | 23 (14) |
| Western European and other | 4 (40) | 29 (18) |
| Non-member States | – | 2 (1) |

| | *Membership* | *Ratification* |
|---|---|---|
| | *Number (percentage)* | |
| **Committee on the Rights of the Child**[f] | | |
| Total: membership and ratifications | 18 | 196 |
| African | 7 (39) | 54 (28) |
| Asia-Pacific | 3 (17) | 55 (28) |
| Eastern Europe | 2 (11) | 22 (11) |
| Latin American and Caribbean | 2 (11) | 33 (17) |
| Western European and other | 4 (22) | 28 (14) |
| Non-member States | – | 4 (2) |
| **Committee on Migrant Workers**[g] | | |
| Total: membership and ratifications | 14 | 49 |
| African | 5 (36) | 20 (41) |
| Asia-Pacific | 3 (21) | 7 (14) |
| Eastern European | 1 (7) | 3 (6) |
| Latin American and Caribbean | 4 (29) | 18 (37) |
| Western European and other | 1 (7) | 1 (2) |
| **Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture**[h] | | |
| Total: membership and ratifications | 25 | 83 |
| African | 5 (20) | 21(25) |
| Asia-Pacific | 3 (12) | 9 (11) |
| Eastern European | 7 (28) | 19 (23) |
| Latin American and Caribbean | 4 (16) | 15 (18) |
| Western European and other | 6 (24) | 19 (23) |
| **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**[i] | | |
| Total: membership and ratifications | 18 | 172 |
| African | 5 (28) | 47 (27) |
| Asia-Pacific | 5 (28) | 44 (26) |
| Eastern European | 4 (22) | 30 (17) |
| Latin American and Caribbean | 1 (6) | 23 (13) |
| Western European and other | 3 (17) | 26 (15) |
| Non-member States | – | 2 (1) |
| **Committee on Enforced Disappearances**[j] | | |
| Total: membership and ratifications | 10 | 54 |
| African | – | 13 (24) |
| Asia-Pacific | 2 (20) | 7 (13) |
| Eastern European | 1 (10) | 8 (15) |
| Latin American and Caribbean | 4 (40) | 15 (28) |
| Western European and other | 3 (30) | 11 (20) |

[a] Last election of members held on 22 June 2017.
[b] Next election of members to be held on 14 June 2018.
[c] Next election of members to be held in April 2018.
[d] Next election of members to be held on 29 June 2018.
[e] Next election of members to be held on 5 October 2017.
[f] Next election of members to be held in June 2018.
[g] Last election of members of the Committee on Migrant Workers held on 28 June 2017.
[h] Next election of members of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture to be held in October 2018.
[i] Next election of members of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to be held on 12 June 2018.
[j] Last election of members held on 20 June 2017.

## B. Current gender balance in membership of treaty bodies

23. Just 75 of the 172 treaty body members (44 per cent) are women. Other than the members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, all of whom except one are female, only 53 treaty body members (30 per cent) are women and the membership of all the treaty bodies remains dominated by men (see table 5). The Committee on Enforced Disappearances (8 of 10 members are men), the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (17 of 18 members are men) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (22 of 23 members are women) have the highest rates of gender imbalance.

24. At its seventeenth session, held from 20 March to 12 April 2017, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities expressed concern about the absence of gender parity and called upon States parties to include women with disabilities in future elections of the Committee in order to ensure gender balance.

Table 5
**Gender composition of treaty bodies**

| | | *Female* | *Male* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Committee* | *Total* | *(percentage)* | |
| Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination | 18 | 7 (39) | 11 (61) |
| Human Rights Committee | 18 | 8 (45) | 10 (56) |
| Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights | 18 | 5 (28) | 13 (72) |
| Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women | 23 | 22 (96) | 1 (4) |
| Committee against Torture | 10 | 4 (40) | 6 (60) |
| Committee on the Rights of the Child | 18 | 9 (50) | 9 (50) |
| Committee on Migrant Workers | 14 | 5 (36) | 9 (64) |
| Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture | 25 | 12 (48) | 13 (52) |
| Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | 18 | 1 (6) | 17 (94) |
| Committee on Enforced Disappearances | 10 | 2 (20) | 8 (80) |
| **Total** | **172** | **75 (44)** | **97 (56)** |

Table 6
**Evolution of number of women per Committee**

| | *Number of women* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Committee* | *2013* | *2015* | *2017* |
| Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Human Rights Committee | 5 | 5 | 8 |
| Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women | 22 | 22 | 22 |
| Committee against Torture | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Committee on the Rights of the Child | 11 | 9 | 9 |
| Committee on Migrant Workers | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture | 8 | 13 | 12 |
| Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | 7 | 6 | 1 |
| Committee on Enforced Disappearances | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| **Total** | **69** | **70** | **75** |

## VI. Conclusions

25. **Under the terms of the nine core international human rights treaties and one optional protocol that establish treaty bodies, the modalities for the nomination and election of treaty body members are a matter for the States parties to those instruments. In respect of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the nomination of candidates for election is a matter for States parties, whereas election is a matter for the members of the Economic and Social Council, with geographical distribution being subject to Council resolution 1985/17. In that regard, and recalling the recommendation made in paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 68/268, the Secretary-General recommends that the Council consider replacing the existing procedure for the election of experts to the Committee with a meeting of States parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, while preserving the current structure, organization and administrative arrangement of the Committee, as set forth in Council resolution 1985/17.**

26. **The Secretary-General is concerned about the lack of equitable geographic distribution in the membership of most of the human rights treaty bodies, and wishes to draw attention to paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 68/268, in which the Assembly encouraged States parties, in the election of treaty body experts, to give due consideration, as stipulated in the relevant human rights instruments, to equitable geographical distribution, the representation of the different forms of civilization and the principal legal systems, balanced gender representation and the participation of experts with disabilities in the membership of the human rights treaty bodies. In that regard, the Secretary-General strongly recommends that States parties, individually and through meetings of States parties, step up efforts to achieve equitable geographical representation in the treaty bodies when nominating new members or re-electing existing members.**

27. **The Secretary-General is also concerned about the gender imbalance in the membership of the treaty bodies, in particular, in the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and strongly recommends that States parties ensure the equal representation of women and men in the human rights treaty body membership through their considerate nomination of candidates and voting.**

28. **In addition, the Secretary-General recommends that States parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, which allows for each State party to nominate two candidates, take into consideration the principles of equitable geographical distribution and gender balance in nominating candidates for election to the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture.**

29. **The Secretary-General also recommends that the present report be forwarded to the Chairs of the meetings or conferences of States parties, as well as to the Economic and Social Council, for consideration at the next meetings of those forums, in particular, those organized to elect members of the treaty bodies.**

# Annex

## Regions established by the General Assembly

The statistics contained in the present report were calculated on the basis of the following regions established by the General Assembly:

### African States (54 States)

Algeria
Angola
Benin
Botswana
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cabo Verde
Cameroon
Central African Republic
Chad
Comoros
Congo
Côte d'Ivoire
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Djibouti
Egypt
Equatorial Guinea
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Gabon
Gambia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Kenya
Lesotho
Liberia
Libya
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Mauritania
Mauritius
Morocco
Mozambique
Namibia
Niger
Nigeria
Rwanda
Sao Tome and Principe
Senegal
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Somalia
South Africa
South Sudan
Sudan
Swaziland
Togo
Tunisia
Uganda
United Republic of Tanzania
Zambia
Zimbabwe

## Asia-Pacific States (54 States)

Afghanistan
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Bhutan
Brunei Darussalam
Cambodia
China
Cyprus
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Fiji
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Iraq
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kiribati
Kuwait
Kyrgyzstan
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Lebanon
Malaysia
Maldives
Marshall Islands
Micronesia (Federated States of)
Mongolia
Myanmar
Nauru
Nepal
Oman
Pakistan
Palau
Papua New Guinea
Philippines
Qatar
Republic of Korea
Samoa
Saudi Arabia
Singapore
Solomon Islands
Sri Lanka
Syrian Arab Republic
Tajikistan
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Tonga
Turkmenistan
Tuvalu
United Arab Emirates
Uzbekistan
Vanuatu
Viet Nam
Yemen[a]

## Eastern European States (23 States)

Albania
Armenia[b]
Azerbaijan[b]
Belarus
Bosnia and Herzegovina[c]
Bulgaria
Croatia[c]
Czechia[d]
Estonia[b]
Georgia[b]
Hungary
Latvia[b]
Lithuania[b]
Montenegro
Poland
Republic of Moldova[b]
Romania
Russian Federation[b]
Serbia[c]
Slovakia[d]
Slovenia[c]
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia[c]
Ukraine

## Latin American and Caribbean States (33 States)

Antigua and Barbuda
Argentina
Bahamas
Barbados
Belize
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Brazil
Chile
Colombia
Costa Rica
Cuba
Dominica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
El Salvador
Grenada
Guatemala
Guyana
Haiti
Honduras
Jamaica
Mexico
Nicaragua
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Suriname
Trinidad and Tobago
Uruguay
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

**Western European and other States (29 States)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Andorra | Luxembourg |
| Australia | Malta |
| Austria | Monaco |
| Belgium | Netherlands |
| Canada | New Zealand |
| Denmark | Norway |
| Finland | Portugal |
| France | San Marino |
| Germany[e] | Spain |
| Greece | Sweden |
| Iceland | Switzerland |
| Ireland | Turkey |
| Israel | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland |
| Italy | United States of America |
| Liechtenstein | |

**Total: 193 Member States**

**States parties that are not members of the United Nations**

Cook Islands[f]

Holy See[g]

Niue[f]

State of Palestine[h]

(Footnotes to the annex)

[a] On 22 May 1990, the Yemen Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen merged to form the Republic of Yemen. Between 6 April 1989 and 22 May 1990, both States were parties to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, resulting in an increase in the number of States parties from the Asia-Pacific States.

[b] The Russian Federation, as at 24 December 1991, maintained full responsibility for the rights and obligations of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics under the multilateral treaties deposited with the Secretary-General. The territory that formerly constituted the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, entirely within the Eastern European States, is now represented by the Russian Federation and 12 other independent States, 7 within the Eastern European States (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Republic of Moldova) and 5 within the Asia-Pacific States (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). Belarus (as the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) and Ukraine (as the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) were each founding members of the United Nations in their own right.

[c] The following States succeeded to the treaty rights and obligations with effect from the dates indicated previously undertaken by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Bosnia and Herzegovina (6 March 1992), Croatia (8 October 1991), Serbia and Montenegro (27 April 1992), Slovenia (25 June 1991) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (17 September 1991). The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia ceased to exist upon the independence of those five successor States. With regard to Serbia and Montenegro, subsequently, the National Assembly of the Republic of Montenegro adopted its declaration of independence on 3 June 2006, following the referendum on 21 May 2006, which was conducted pursuant to article 60 of the Constitutional Charter of Serbia and Montenegro. Montenegro was admitted to membership in the United Nations by General Assembly resolution 60/264 on 28 June 2006. The Republic of Serbia continued the membership of Serbia and Montenegro in the United Nations, including all organs and organizations of the United Nations system, on the basis of article 60 of the Constitutional Charter of Serbia and Montenegro, activated by the declaration of independence adopted by the National Assembly of Montenegro.

[d] Czechoslovakia ceased to exist on 1 January 1993, on which date the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as successor States to the former Czechoslovakia, considered themselves bound by the multilateral treaties deposited with the Secretary-General to which Czechoslovakia was party. Both States are within the Eastern European States. Since 17 May 2016, "Czechia" has replaced "Czech Republic" as the short name used in the United Nations.

[e] The German Democratic Republic acceded to the Federal Republic of Germany on 3 October 1990, resulting in one fewer State within the Eastern European States.

[f] The Cook Islands and Niue are self-governing territories in free association with New Zealand. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was applied by New Zealand to the Cook Islands and Niue at the time of its ratification of the Convention, on 10 January 1985. The Secretary-General, as depositary of multilateral treaties, recognized the full treaty-making capacity of the Cook Islands in 1992 and of Niue in 1994. For the purpose of the present report, both States are included with the other Pacific States in the Asia-Pacific States, notwithstanding that New Zealand is part of the Western European and other States.

[g] The Holy See has observer status at the United Nations and is a party to three human rights conventions: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention against Torture and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is not a member of any group of States.

[h] On 29 November 2012, the General Assembly accorded Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations. On 2 April 2014, the State of Palestine deposited with the Secretary-General its instruments of accession to a number of international human rights treaties.

United Nations A/72/285

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 August 2017

Original: English

**Seventy-second session**
Item 71 (b) of the provisional agenda*
**Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance: comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

# Group of independent eminent experts on the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

## Note by the Secretariat

1. In paragraphs 15 and 16 of its resolution 71/181, the General Assembly reiterated its requests to the Secretary-General, pursuant to its resolution 68/151, to revitalize and reactivate the operational activities of the group of independent eminent experts and in this regard to ensure the full functionality of the group by filling the existing vacancies, at the latest by the end of March 2017, in accordance with its resolution 56/266.

2. It also reiterated its invitation to the Human Rights Council, pursuant to paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 68/151, to ensure the visibility, effective participation and optimal utilization of the vast knowledge and experience of the group of independent eminent experts, within its subsidiary structures, charged with the mandate of and responsibility for the comprehensive follow-up to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance and the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and in that regard requested the Council to submit a progress report to the Assembly at its seventy-second session.

3. In this context, the Secretariat hereby informs the General Assembly that the independent eminent experts, Hanna Suchocka and Edna Maria Santos Roland, participated in the fourteenth session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, held in Geneva from 5 to 14 October 2016 (A/HRC/35/45). The experts briefed the members of the Working Group on the challenges that they faced, inter alia, the definition of the mandate of the group of independent eminent experts, the appointment of new members and the lack of additional human and financial resources.

4. With regard to filling the existing vacancies, the coordinator of the Asia-Pacific Group (Maldives) forwarded to the Secretariat the nomination of Saied A. Ashowwaf

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(Saudi Arabia), through its Permanent Mission. Similarly, the coordinator of the African Group (Tunisia) forwarded to the Secretariat the nomination of Ibrahim Agboola Gambari (Nigeria), through its Permanent Mission.

5. The General Assembly is invited to take appropriate action.